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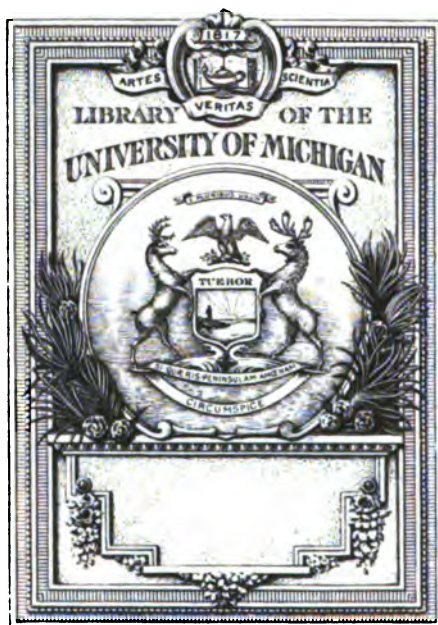
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ALLAN DARE

AND

ROBERT LE DIABLE.

A ROMANCE.

BY
ADMIRAL PORTER.



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALFRED FREDERICKS.

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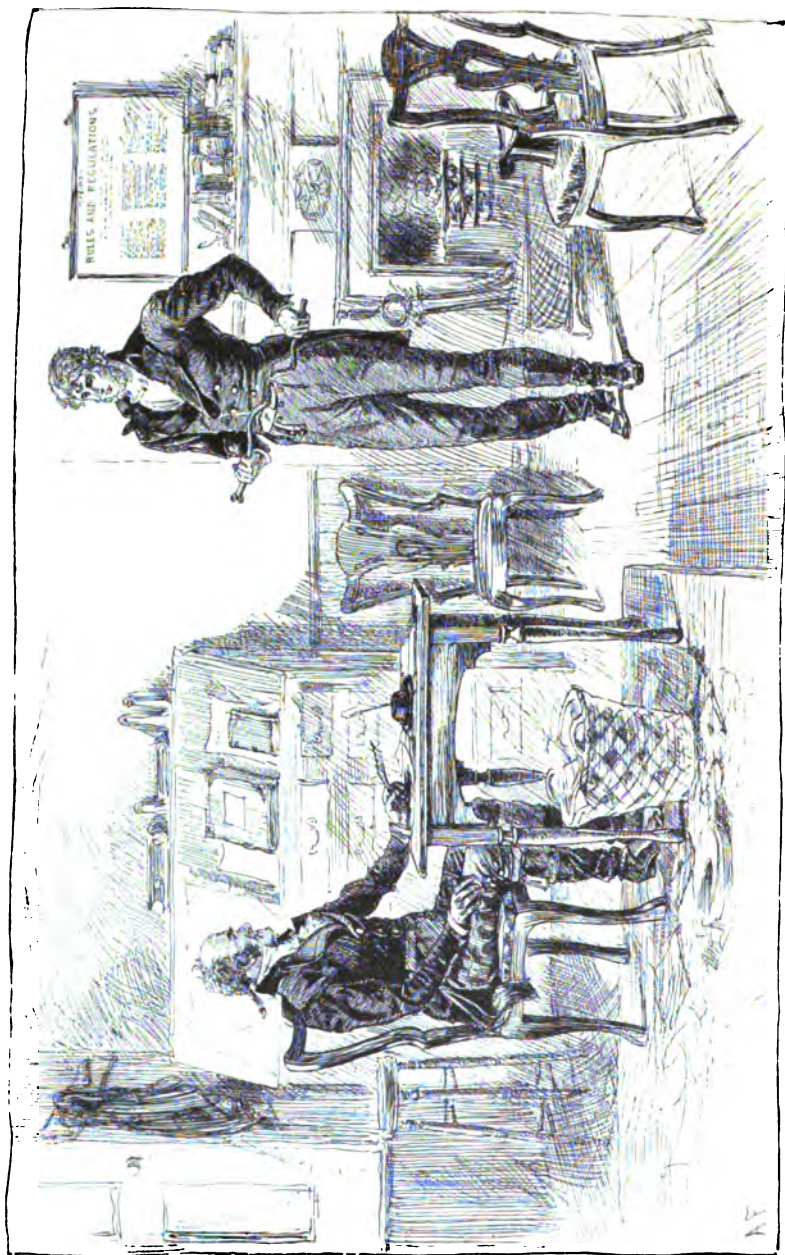
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He twisted the poker into a curl, as if it had been a light wire.

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ALLAN DARE

AND

ROBERT LE DIABLE.

CHAPTER I.

MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA.

A HUNDRED years ago there stood a small town on the shore of Massachusetts Bay called Manchester ; and this town still exists in almost primitive simplicity, surrounded by the most beautiful and romantic scenery.

At the time when my story commences the village of Manchester contained perhaps two hundred inhabitants, with now and then a somewhat pretentious dwelling raising its head above the smaller habitations around it. In these lived those who might be considered the lords of the manor, inasmuch as they dispensed all the patronage and owned most of the soil.

One wide street ran through the little village, which was indeed the old stage-road leading along the coast from Salem to Gloucester ; and along this street the houses were placed to suit the taste of the builder, without much regard to regularity, yet everything looked neat and trim, and proclaimed that, though the inhabitants of Manchester were not rich, they were comfortable and happy.

The town could boast of a grocery-store, which sold many things besides groceries ; an apothecary-shop, which, with its red and green vases, was a prominent feature of the street ; a public library, where the collection of books was small if not select ; a comfortable hotel, several little shops, and last, though not least, a simple church that faced the common, where all the inhabitants of the town assembled on Sunday to listen to the pious discourse of the

Rev. Mr. Peabody—some of the older members of the flock enjoying a comfortable nap while the parson, for perhaps the fiftieth time, labored over one of his favorite sermons.

Manchester to-day wears quite a different aspect from what it did a hundred years ago. It has increased in population, although still behind its English namesake, and is attracting notice as one of the most beautiful districts on our Atlantic coast; even Newport can not surpass it in the charms of scenery, or in the architectural beauty of the picturesque cottages that line the coast north and south of the ancient settlement.

But it is far from our intention to write a description of "Manchester-by-the-Sea." Its charms are known to thousands who admire beautiful scenery and who delight in a refreshing atmosphere. There the summer passes so quickly that the time to return to pent-up cities and stuffy houses comes before the summer sojourners are aware of it, and they tear themselves away from this beautiful country with regret too great for expression.

About two miles east of the village, by a winding road, a bold promontory, called "Gale's Point," projects into the bay, its rugged cliff seamed and worn by the storms of centuries. In winter there would seem to be little inducement for visiting this headland, for the nipping blasts from the Atlantic sweep over it with a force that almost lifts one from his feet; and even the wild sea-birds, as they flutter by with discordant scream, hasten on to some more congenial spot, away from the constant battling going on between old Ocean and the mighty rocks. At times the roar of the waves in these contests is audible even in the village of Manchester.

From the top of the promontory is a boundless view of the ocean to the eastward, while on the south the towns of Salem and Marblehead, with their white houses and cupolas, sparkle like gems in the coronet of an empress. To the northeast the view along the rock-bound coast extends as far as Cape Ann, and close by is Magnolia Point, dotted with pretty cottages, the summer retreats of those in pursuit of health and recreation.

These habitations are, however, the creation of modern days, for, at the time of which we are about to treat, the coast in this vicinity was sparsely settled. Railroads and telegraphs were unknown, but a line of ancient stage-coaches traveled daily between Salem and Gloucester, carrying the mail and a few passengers; and this communication with the outside world did not in all likelihood greatly influence the people or their property. The solid men of

Boston were not yet alive to the necessity of having a city home for the winter and a country home for the summer; and, if they wandered abroad at all, it was to the immediate vicinity of the city, where they could run to town twice a week to look after their business.

Railroads, however, have changed matters materially, and now Boston is represented all along the shore by lovely villas and gardens, spots which have no superior in any part of the country.

From the top of Gale's Point an old sailor might well delight to gaze out upon the ocean in its wrath—the unsparing monster with whom he has wrestled from his youth, whose breath has tanned his face until he looks years older, until his dim eye is troubled to tell a sail in the distance from the wing of a sea-gull.

Such an ancient mariner was Samson Goliah Gale, an old Salem merchant-captain, who, having retired from the sea with an ample fortune, was looking along the coast for a suitable site whereon to build himself a house.

As he stood alone on the bold cliff and took in the marvelous beauty of the scene, his heart expanded in fellowship toward his old friend, the sea, which had brought him wealth from out of its depths. He forgot all the buffetings received during the forty years of the vicissitudes of a seaman's life through which he had passed, until he became the wealthy man that he now was.

As he looked over the placid sea, a huge blackfish was sporting on the surface, as those animals are wont to do. The silvery spray, falling like smoke from a field-piece, reminded the old sailor of sport on a large scale that he had witnessed during his career, and he could not control his emotion. He fairly shouted, "There she blows, Betsy Jane!" For the moment he was on board his favorite ship (named after his wife), a vessel he had commanded for many years.

The happy incident of the blackfish decided Captain Gale to select this bluff as the site of his habitation; he came, saw, and purchased. It did not take him long to strike a bargain or a whale.

Old Abijah Flint, who sold the rocky territory to Samson Goliah, wondered, at the time, whether the old sailor was in his right senses in wanting to live in such an "all-fired out-of-the-way place"; but, when the purchaser laid down three hundred brand-new silver dollars, old Flint sagely reflected, "it wasn't no business of his'n."

Samson Goliah became sole proprietor of not only the bluff, but of one hundred acres in and around it, with many beautiful building-sites, a good boat-harbor with sandy beach, and as many granite boulders scattered over the territory as anybody could desire.

To-day the property for which Samson Goliah was thought to have paid an extravagant price is valued at a thousand dollars an acre or more, and is embellished by some of the most costly "cottages" in that part of the country.

Samson Goliah lost no time in contracting for the erection of a substantial dwelling on the summit of the bluff, about forty yards from its extreme edge, from which he could gaze upon old Ocean, as it rolled in with an energy that looked as if it were about to swallow up his new-bought territory.

In the course of a year the house was finished—a large stone building, fifty feet square, with a pointed roof, surmounted by a portentous weather-vane (the effigy of a whale), and the front door flanked on each side by the jawbone of a right-whale, which Samson had brought home from one of his cruises.

The habitation might well have been called "Bleak House," for never was there a more desolate-looking place; but Samson Goliah considered it, in summer or winter, a heaven on earth, and Betsy Jane, his wife, always thought as her husband did.

They found a good school in the village for their sons, Charles and James, aged respectively seventeen and fifteen years, and commenced housekeeping at the same time the boys began to grapple with the higher branches of their education. This was in 1783. In 1787 Samson Goliah and Betsy Jane celebrated the twenty-first birthday of their eldest son, Charles.

A year before this important event Mrs. Lagrange, a lady of French extraction, who had spent many years in England, came to live in Manchester.

She was educated and refined, and an accomplished musician. She was accompanied by two pretty daughters, tall, dark-eyed girls, full of animation and intelligence, who caused no little flutter among the young men of the village, as they tripped along the pleasant streets in their Paris bonnets and dresses of the latest fashion.

Charles and James Gale soon became constant visitors to the home of Mrs. Lagrange, a picturesque cottage on the outskirts of the village.

The result was what any one might have expected from four

romantic young people, and, in less than a year, Charles became engaged to Mary, the eldest daughter; and James and Agnes soon followed their example.

The engagements of the young people met with the full approbation of the respective parents, and both weddings were arranged to occur at the same time in the village church.

It was a clear night in December, 1790. The snow was lying deep upon the ground, and merry sleigh-bells were ringing their music upon the crisp air, while joyful hearts gave expression to their feelings in glad songs and shouts of laughter.

The Gale mansion, for the first time in its history, was illuminated from top to bottom, and figures flitting to and fro showed that something unusual was going on within its rather melancholy-looking walls.

Samson Goliah was sitting in the parlor chimney-corner in his easy-chair, smoking a pipe, while his wife was bustling about from room to room, preparing an entertainment of no ordinary dimensions, with the assistance of two neatly-dressed handmaidens.

"Betsy Jane," said Samson, "ain't it time we heered them sleigh-bells? Parson Peabody has had time enough to splice half a dozen couples. When I was married it didn't take more'n half so long to reel out the ceremony; but nowadays, with their hifalutin notions, they do take uncommon long."

"That's because you were always so hurryin' in your natur, Samson Goliah," said Betsy Jane. "Law me! I shall never forget how you hurried that old preacher through the marriage ceremony, and wouldn't say, 'With all my worldly goods I do thee endow.'"

"Ah, Betsy Jane," said the old man, "those were happy days. This wedding of our two boys with Agnes and Mary Lagrange carries me away back to those days, and I kin see you now, the pretty gal you was, with a figger like a clipper; and when you had your sky-sails and stun-sails set, well, there warn't nothin' that come a-nigh you. Do you remember when I first saw you blow, and gave chase? Well, if you don't, I do. It was exactly forty-five year ago this very day—the most memorable day in my life. That's the reason why I insisted on our young folks getting married to-day. It has brought me all my happiness in life, and, although I say it who shouldn't say it, neither Mary nor Agnes can hold a candle to what you was then, and I'm not sartin they can compare with you in figger now."

Betsy Jane, it must be observed, was a tall, angular figure, with

a mild, benevolent face. Her black eyes were still bright as in youth, but her hair was white as snow, and tied up in a knot, which was secured by a tortoise-shell comb.

As for Samson Goliah, in his sitting position he looked as if he might be any length. His legs stretched from one side of the fireplace to the other, and his arms seemed interminable. He was now, at seventy-five, a fine specimen of the old-fashioned whaleman. Hard as had been the life of the old sailor, and corrugated as had become his face through many years' exposure to the elements, his heart was as soft as a woman's; and if ever a man set up an idol to worship, Samson Goliah was that man, for he had given his whole soul to his Betsy Jane, and during his life had never swerved a hair's breadth from the allegiance he owed to the one whom he had sworn to love and cherish.

He may have hurried the parson through the marriage service, as Betsy Jane declared, but every word had been fixed on his memory, never to be forgotten.

"Betsy Jane," said he, "do you remember the first time I came alongside of you and struck you? Lord, how you reeled out the line, and how soon you got in the flurries! Ah, them were happy days. Do you know what I consider the great events of my life? Well, the principal was the first whale I ever struck. The second was when you said 'Yes' when I popped the question. Laws me, I danced round my room that night till all the buttons flew off my coat, and I kicked my shoes up the chimbley. I eat so much breakfast next morning, that mother thought I had got a promise of first mate in the brig Harpoon. Yes, I had the promise of a first mate, but it was you, Betsy Jane, and a first-rater you have been."

Betsy Jane's eyes swam with tears as she said: "You were a handsome lad, Samson Goliah, when I first knowed you, and you are a pictur now, for all your seventy-five years; but you were a worriting chap when you came a-courting me, and wouldn't let another fellow look at me. Don't I remember the time you challenged Andy Graham to fight with harpoons, because he invited me to go fishing with him? Perhaps Andy might have gone out with me if he hadn't seen you, the day before, throw your harpoon, with fifty fathoms of line, right through the center of your old sou'wester. Ah, but you were a handsome lad in them days, Samson Goliah, and many a night I lay awake, fearin' you wouldn't ask me."

"Never in my life, Betsy Jane," said the ancient mariner, "did I take as much pleasure in keepin' company with an eighty-barrel whale as I have done in keepin' company with you. You have brightened the down-hill of my life in a way no other woman could have done. And then you have brought up our two boys as only you could do. It is true, Betsy Jane, I was disappointed at their not takin' to the harpoon, but it warn't their natur. They took after you, and your heart was always so kind that you could hardly let a chicken be killed, much less a whale."

There is no knowing how long this interesting conversation might have been continued, had it not been interrupted by the jingle of many sleigh-bells approaching the house. Samson Goliah and his wife hurried to the front door to welcome the wedding party, who were making the welkin ring with their merriment. Never were there a handsomer or merrier pair of brides and grooms than those now assembled in the parlor. The brides' cheeks glowed with excitement and the cold air, and old Samson Goliah and Betsy Jane covered them with kisses, while the grooms came in for their full share of the embraces.

"You have made a good strike, boys," said Samson Goliah, "and reeled in your fish in ship-shape manner, but they can't beat your mother when she was a gal, and had all her stun-sails set. It carries me back to the days when I first see your mother blow, and I hauled up alongside of her," and the old man danced around like a young fellow of twenty.

"Order in the fiddle, Betsy Jane. A weddin' without a fiddle is like a lobster without a claw, or a sailor without a jack-knife."

There was a fair company present on this festive occasion; all the notables of Manchester were on hand, and even the face of Parson Peabody was wreathed in smiles, possibly in anticipation of the handsome fee that he expected.

No such event as this double wedding had occurred in Manchester before within the memory of the oldest inhabitant; and Samson Goliah Gale being reputed the richest man in town, rumor had run wild in dilating on the splendors of the wedding-supper, which it was expected would at least equal that given by the rich merchant, Eli Perkins, on the marriage of his favorite daughter.

The expectations of the guests were fully realized. On the festive board appeared roast turkey, rounds of beef, a saddle of mutton, chickens, ham, lobsters, and clams; game of all kinds; pumpkin and mince pies, and other New England delicacies far too

numerous to mention. In the center of the table appeared a large, sugar-coated plum-cake, which contained a gold ring. The young, unmarried ladies eyed this monster cake with great interest, for each hoped to be the winner of the prize.

The old whaleman stood at the head of the table and carved the turkey, while his wife served out the "apple-sass" and other concomitants, and, after all were properly helped, Samson Goliah ordered his old madeira, which he had hoarded for this occasion, to be passed around, and proposed a toast.

Smiling benignantly on the assembly, the old man said : "Ladies and gentlemen, here is my toast :

" 'To the whale that blows,
The ship that goes,
And the lass that loves a whaler.' "

The toast was drunk with great enthusiasm, to the delight of Samson Goliah, who kissed Betsy Jane many times. Then Parson Peabody arose and addressed the company. He expatiated upon the beauty of the brides and the intelligence of the bridegrooms. The sinewy frames of these young men the parson compared to oaks of the forest, made to protect the tender vines that would cling to them through life. He then paid a passing compliment to Samson Goliah and Betsy Jane, pointed out how beautifully their lives had been in accord, how faithful they had been to each other, like Isaac and Rebecca, and how the sunset of their existence was brightened with a halo of glory such as seldom falls to the lot of mortals. He called upon the sons to follow in the footsteps of their father, who, though he had not many years to remain on earth, would leave behind him a prestige of honor and truthfulness better far than earthly riches.

Often did these words come back to one of his hearers, when in after-years his eye was dim, his frame was bowed, and there was no spot on earth where he could lay his head with a peaceful conscience.

While eulogizing the two brides, the worthy parson paid a high tribute to their mother, who under his own eye had brought up her daughters in all the Christian virtues and intellectual accomplishments. He spoke of their mother's gentle ways, and her power of endearing herself to all those who knew her ; what a gleam of sunshine her presence had shed on the little town of Manchester, where people had to depend upon one another for that happiness

which could only be found in contentment, and the absence of worldly pride, that bane of modern society.

He implored the daughters not to forget their mother's teachings, not to follow after the follies and vanities of the world. He showed them how often husbands, through the weaknesses of their wives, were led on from one temptation to another, until they were involved in the maelstrom which carries so many to the bottom.

This, too, was remembered in after-years, when bitter anguish could not efface the memories of the past.

The worthy parson wound up with a eulogy upon Betsy Jane, during which deep silence prevailed in the room. He painted her pure and patient character during years of comparative poverty, the love she bore her husband, and her devotion to all his interests—her attention in sickness and in health, her love and care for her children, but, above all, the instruction she had given them in relation to their great Father in heaven, so that in fact they already stood before the world as upright, honorable men ; and she, the mother, was well known in their small community as possessing all the Christian virtues, without fear and without reproach.

At the end of the parson's speech, which some people thought longer than was necessary, the violin struck up a lively air, and dancing began, which was continued until midnight, a very late hour in those old days. All the visitors went home in the highest spirits, and silence reigned around the solemn-looking mansion of old Captain Gale.

CHAPTER II.

NEW PROSPECTS.

WE have brought some of the principal characters in our story to the front as briefly as possible, the early portion of their lives not possessing much importance in connection with the events to be hereafter related.

At the time of their marriage, Charles Gale was twenty-four years of age and his brother James twenty-two. Both were youths of fine natural ability, and seemed calculated to make their way in the world in any profession they might follow.

Although both young men bore high characters, there were yet

shades of difference that would not appear to a casual observer, or perhaps come to light in ordinary business intercourse. Both were gay young fellows, ready to oblige everybody with whom they came in contact, and making friends in all quarters. But there was something in the character of James more winning by far than in that of Charles. There were an openness and candor in the former that the latter did not possess, although Charles was thought to be the most astute man of business.

There was no one of their acquaintance who would not have preferred to solicit favors from the younger rather than from the older brother, why, no one could exactly tell, for the shades of difference in their two characters were so slight that few persons could really tell where they existed. Some thought that Charles had too much of the quality of secretiveness, while others said that that was a good trait for a confidential clerk to possess, and that it would be well for James if he had more of this quality.

These two brothers were devoted to each other, and the younger looked up to the elder with great respect, although the difference in their ages was so slight.

Indeed, James never undertook anything of moment without consulting his elder brother ; while Charles, on the contrary, did not think it necessary to consult James on any subject. Both the brothers were tall, with well-formed figures, their muscles having been developed by plenty of healthy exercise, particularly by long tramps in pursuit of game, with which the neighboring woods then abounded, before the increase in the number of pot-hunters had made gray squirrels an almost extinct species.

The two brides, Mary and Agnes, were undoubtedly very handsome, and there was so little difference in their ages that a stranger could hardly detect it, but would suppose them twins. Both were tall, with fine features and luxuriant chestnut hair. Their dispositions were admirably suited to the men they had married, yet Agnes was the favorite with all who knew them.

No one could exactly tell what was the difference, yet James was considered the most fortunate man of the two by their friends, who yet admitted there was little to choose between the two sisters.

Both young women were the wonder of the country people on account of their superior education and accomplishments. Mary was perhaps more disposed to the vanities of the world. There was more of an attempt at fashion in her dress ; she was not so punctual in her attendance at church ; and she seldom missed a party among

the young people. She had not the same frankness and candor as her sister, and was not so well calculated to bear reverses of fortune should any overtake her. She had something of the secretiveness of her husband, perhaps caused by her intercourse with him, but it was thought by some who knew her to be a blemish in her character likely to affect her in after-life.

When people start together on the journey through life with their hearts expanding to all the finer feelings of human nature, how little can any one foretell the circumstances that are to influence their career ! The swift torrents of adversity drive almost unheeded over a character of adamant, while one of sand and clay is soon disintegrated by the simplest currents. How often do we find those who in early youth have given the fairest promise of attaining the greatest happiness, to be those who secure the least ! If we examine into the character of childhood, we may find there the seeds of immorality, which, if allowed to germinate, will produce disease in the mind as surely as the canker-worm will produce disease in the fruit-tree.

Ancient legends tell of a melodious lyre, not played by mortal hands, which charmed the world with its tuneful strains. Those airs from the ancient lyre calmed the souls of men and produced oblivion of all other objects.

The story of the ancient lyre is an allegory. It is purity that makes the heavenly music in the heart of man, that offers to him the waters of Lethe when adversity and trouble cloud the mind. It is love that drives the breath of fancied woes away from the fevered brow, and sends these foul vapors to repose in the regions where they belong.

There is a ceaseless melody in hearts pulsating with pure and mutual love—not love born of passion, which soon wears out, but love with reason, while the heart is attuned to those sweet sounds.

It was with such music that the soul of Agnes was filled when she wedded James Gale, and clasped his hand to march with him through life over the toilsome and wandering way that leads finally to the portals of death.

She only desired to share her husband's lot, whatever it might be ; to alleviate his sorrows, and have a heart on which she could rely when anguish should wring her brow—to joy with him in his pleasures, and feel with him in his pains, and, finally, after the vicissitudes of life were over, to surrender her soul to her Creator on the same day and hour that he did.

Agnes had no idea that she would ever be parted from her husband except for a few hours, which would appear ages to her ; and there was nothing she ever did that was not in some way connected with him. We seldom meet with such pure characters as hers ; they generally exist only in the pages of romance, but still there are such beings, and Agnes Gale was a living example.

There was a repose in the character of him who called this sweet girl his wife, that those who had studied him knew could experience no change. He would meet prosperity and adversity with that equanimity with which Christian spirits meet the events of life. He would always be prepared for all things, and would be a rock on which that young heart could lean at all times with the certainty of love and protection. She was the melodious lyre that charmed his existence. No cloud had ever come between them to dim their joy. No thought had one unshared by the other, and their souls moved in such accord that it might well be said angels touched the chords that bound them together :

“ And while the melting words she breathed
Were by the echoes wafted round,
Her looks had with the chords so wreathed,
One knew not which gave forth the sound.”

Charles and James Gale were both employed in lucrative occupations, and were doing more than well for young men of their age. James was head clerk in a commission-house in Salem, where he received what was in those days the handsome salary of fifteen hundred dollars a year ; while Charles was principal clerk in the Boston Bank, where he received eighteen hundred dollars a year, affording him ample means to live in good style in the suburbs of the city.

After spending ten days' honeymoon with the old folks, Charles Gale and his wife moved to their new home, greatly to the regret of Samson Goliah, who declared the Gale house was large enough for half a dozen families. But in those days there were no railroads, and it was not possible to transact business in Boston and live in Manchester. As to James, he could easily drive to Salem in the morning in time for business and return in time for supper at five o'clock.

A year after their marriage Agnes presented her husband with twin boys, and about the same time Charles and Mary had a son born to them.

All these boys were fine children, with nothing in particular re-

markable about them except that each of the twins had a peculiar mark on the right arm just above the elbow—a sign by which they could at any time be identified.

As they advanced in life, the twins became a great source of happiness and amusement to their grandfather. They showed the wildest and most reckless character for young children, and, as a result, their mother was in constant dread for fear something would happen. Even at the age of five years they would crawl about the steep cliffs and wade into the surf, or get into some convenient boat and drift out seaward.

The children seemed to have a determined spirit in their little bodies that nothing could daunt, and their ardor in hunting up the most dangerous adventures was in no way diminished by the wonderful stories related to them by their old grandfather, who, with a boy on each knee, would talk by the hour about pirates, mermaids, shipwrecks, fights between whales and sword-fish, and of other marvelous things.

The result was the development of an immense amount of energy in these two youths. By their sixth year they had grown so precocious, and had performed such wonderful feats, that their old grandfather was perfectly delighted, congratulating himself that he had laid the foundation for two of the greatest whalemén the world had ever seen.

Their mother, however, took a very different view of the matter, and could see nothing in the headstrong disposition of her boys to comfort her. Their father, who saw little of them, tried to console his wife with the idea that the boys would soon expend their youthful energy, or that in the end it would probably take a more useful direction.

Matters were in this condition when the twins had attained their fifth year. One day, early in the spring, James Gale returned home unusually early, and seemed greatly perturbed in spirit.

Agnes was sitting on the porch, watching the placid sea. The fluttering sea-birds laved their pinions in the waves and screamed with delight to find the great storm-king was taking his repose. Birds that had flown away from a hoary winter were happily sporting beneath a kindlier sky, and the porpoise and blackfish were turning up their bodies from the depths of ocean reflected in the sun like spots of fire, heedless of danger, and thinking but of disporting themselves on one of God's loveliest days. Rosy Spring was rushing into the arms of May—that time when the prolific earth

swells with buds and sparkles with flowery meads, when the festooned vines begin to sprout, and tiny buds to expand into velvet foliage. The winding streams, overflowing with the April rains, pursued their way through verdant fields and waving woods, and not a cloud in the sky disturbed the serenity of the prospect.

It was on such a day as this that a temperament like that of Agnes would take the greatest delight in losing herself in pleasant reveries, and basking in the sunshine of nature that she loved so well. The air of the sea was to her as the nectar of the gods, and the glorious sunshine sank into the recesses of her soul.

She scarcely heard her husband's step as he came up the walk ; but the first glance at his face told her that something unusual had happened. She flew to meet him, and welcomed him with a kiss, while her anxious countenance showed that she determined to share with him his joys or his sorrows.

"Don't be nervous, darling," said James, putting his arm lovingly around her. "What brings me home is either good news or bad news, just as you take it. But come, let us go in and discuss matters with father, and be guided by his advice. What I have to say is too important to our interests and those of our boys to be lightly considered. The old man makes no mistakes in matters where good judgment is required, and he will give no advice which it will not be to my interest to follow."

Agnes trembled like a leaf even at these preparatory remarks. Her heart, but a moment before filled with joy, now foreboded every sort of evil.

"Well, James," said Samson Goliah, "this is truly a rare sight, to see you away from your desk at this time o' day. What's up?"

James hesitated a moment, and then said : "Father, I will tell you, in as few words as possible. I have had an offer to go out to Canton as head clerk to the firm of Russell & Perkins, with a salary of five thousand dollars a year."

Here Agnes sprang up and threw her arms around his neck. "I will go with you," she said ; "you can't go without me and the boys."

"Ah, darling," said James, "that's the trouble : you can't go now ; but I will come back for you if matters turn out as I hope, and I find the climate one in which you can live and preserve your health. Besides, it's not yet settled that I am to go. If you object, I shall give the matter up at once, although it's a great opening—one which a young man of my age had no right to expect."

The tears rained from Agnes's eyes, and she clung convulsively to her husband as if some one were trying to snatch him away from her. "O James," she cried, "I can not part with you ; it will kill me ; and I know we shall never meet again ! I must go with you, withersoever you go. I married you never to part, and I shall die if you exact this parting from me."

James was too much overcome to speak without shedding tears. He was quite unmanned, and looked at his father appealingly, as if to say, What shall I do ?

Old Samson Goliath was not himself free from agitation, but he took in the situation in a moment, and braced himself up to meet what to him would be personal pain, but which his sound sense told him would be a great advantage to his son.

In those days American mercantile houses were few in China ; and it was a source of great pride to the old sailor to think that one of his sons had been selected to fill so important a trust as head clerk, a place that many old Boston clerks had sought in vain. The old man realized that, in this parting from his son, he would never look upon him again ; for Samson Goliath was a very old man, though hale and hearty. He had passed his eighty-second birthday ; but his eye was as bright, his cheek as ruddy, and his limbs as sturdy, as those of many men of sixty. His had not been a life of dissipation ; he had always lived after God's ordinances, and had ever practiced the greatest sobriety and temperance in all things. He had, in fact, led a natural life, and nursed his energies, so that in old age he was free from the infirmities that usually fall to the lot of elderly people.

His heart was, however, as soft as a woman's, and he was overflowing with affection for those who formed the little circle around him. He loved his two sons with a fervency seldom equaled, and, while he consulted his own comfort and happiness in having them near him and about him, so as to enjoy their society, yet he felt a lively interest in all that concerned their welfare.

It took him some minutes to recover from his agitation at the affecting scene before him. He could not help recalling the many partings he had undergone from his beloved wife, and he could sympathize deeply with the two young people now bathed in tears.

"Tut, tut, Agnes !" he said, kindly ; "come, be a woman, and don't give way to tears over an event that most women would be delighted at. Give the boy line and let him sound ; he'll come up again all right, you may depend upon it. He has an opportunity

to make a fortune—an opportunity that don't offer every day ; and, by way of insuring his success, I intend to give him, when he starts for China, ten thousand dollars with which to speculate as occasion offers. And I know him so well that I am sure, with the opportunities that will be open to him, that he will return home in a few years as rich as a nabob, even though his liver may be a trifle out of order. He'll bring home ten eighty-barrel whales under hatches, as sure as a mackerel returns to its birthplace."

"But, father," sobbed Agnes, "how am I to stand such a separation ? It will kill me !" and she burst into a fresh fit of weeping.

"No, child," said the old man ; "the Lord tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, and he will give you strength to bear up against a separation which will result in a great benefit to your husband and your children. In less than a year you will be able to follow James to China ; but you could not go at present, as you well know. When the time comes, if need be, Betsy Jane and I will go with you. I should like to take one more short cruise before I run out to the end of my cable ; and if on the voyage I occasionally see a whale spout, it will more than pay me for the trouble and expense I shall encounter. Now, there's a bargain. Agnes, stop crying, and set to packing your husband's trunk, for he must be in Boston day after to-morrow. You shall go down and see the last of him, and Betsy Jane and I will go with you and bring you back."

Betsy Jane was called in and the case stated to her ; and, after a hearty cry on her part, she backed up her husband's arguments, and Agnes resigned herself to her fate.

James and Agnes had little time for further discussion, as he had to return immediately to Salem and give his final answer to those who had offered him the situation. Those were not the days when the wires flashed information to the ends of the earth, and the mail only came to Manchester three times a week.

So James embraced his wife, and, bidding her be of good cheer, returned to Salem, his heart aching at the thought of a separation that would keep him from her for many months, yet encouraged at the prospect before him, and full of hope that his wife and children would be well provided for in the future.

Meanwhile, poor Agnes went about the house with tearful eyes, preparing for her husband's voyage, and thankful that she had some object in view with which to distract her painful thoughts.

Two days after this the whole family accompanied James Gale

to Boston, where he embarked for China in the ship Plover. The captain was a jovial fellow, about forty years of age, and had the reputation of being a thorough seaman, and one who attended to the comfort of his passengers.

He promised Agnes everything she required of him, and then the fond couple bade each other good-by, as if they were parting forever, for both had a presentiment that their separation would be long and perhaps final.

The last farewell was said, and Samson Goliath led his weeping train to the boat that was to land them on the wharf.

There they stood watching the ship as she made sail and stood out of the harbor. In a few moments she was under a cloud of canvas, for in those days ships trading to the East Indies carried large crews, and something of man-of-war discipline was maintained on board. The wind blew fresh and fair, and the ship receded rapidly from sight.

"Agnes," said the old sailor, "let us go. God help me if I never see him again!"

Charles Gale and his wife had come to see James off. Charles had been intrusted by James with all his affairs, and he promised to receive and forward to Agnes all amounts sent by James from China, and to invest such moneys as he might send for her benefit. James's last words to Charles were: "Dear brother, God knows what may happen to me in the future, but, as you value my love, protect Agnes and her children in my absence in case of anything happening to father, and treat my children as you would your own." Charles promised solemnly to do as his brother wished, and thus they parted.

The cheering assurances of his brother dwelt upon James's memory many days after the parting, and brought him comfort when he would otherwise have looked upon the dark side of things.

CHAPTER III.

THE CONTEST OF THE SHIPS.

Two years passed away, and Agnes had received many letters from her husband, who sent the most encouraging accounts of his situation and prospects.

Five months after his departure, Agnes had been blessed with a daughter, a beautiful little rose-bud who delighted the hearts of all who looked upon her.

James had received full accounts of the new addition to his household, and had made arrangements with the captain of the Plover to bring his family out to him on the next voyage. They had all prepared for the journey, including Samson Goliah and Betsy Jane, and were waiting with happy expectation for the captain to name the day of sailing.

But about this time a fast-sailing ship arrived from China, bringing the fearful intelligence that the cholera had broken out at Canton, and was rapidly spreading through the Eastern world. For this reason it was necessary to give up the voyage for the present, especially as James had written to his father under no circumstances to attempt to proceed to China until advised by him that he could do so with safety. He said the pestilence was spreading rapidly, and that death was upon every side.

The disease continued to ravage China for over a year, during which time James still wrote of the impossibility of the family's joining him, although he did all he could to relieve their fears for his own safety.

All the members of the family naturally underwent very great anxiety. Agnes's days were passed in tears, and night brought little sleep to her weary eyelids.

At length Samson Goliah received a letter from his son that the scourge had abated, but that it would not be necessary for his family to come to China, as he himself was about to return to the United States on business for his employers, and would bring them out with him on his return to China. He wrote that he would sail in the Plover in a month's time, and said further that he had been successful in trade far beyond his expectations; that he had gone deeply into the opium-trade, and had realized some sixty thousand dollars, which was more than a competence in case he should decide not to return to China.

He wrote to his brother, saying that he would get two bills of exchange for sixty thousand dollars, one of which he would retain, and the other send to him by the ship *Morning Star*, which was to sail the same day as the *Plover*. As both ships were of nearly the same rate of speed, he supposed they would reach Boston at the same time.

Two years and four months after James Gale had left home, he stepped on board the *Plover* to return to Boston.

The *Plover* and the *Morning Star* were to sail on the same day from Canton with full cargoes of tea, and as in those days five hundred dollars was paid to the captain of the ship that first reached port with a fresh cargo of tea, and as the ships would carry all sail possible, and would frequently be in sight of each other, it was expected that the race home would be an exciting one.

The two ships lay not far distant from each other in the port of Canton. All sail was set on both to royals, the head-sails hanging loose from the head-booms, and the spanker hanging in the brails, the courses hanging by the clew-garnets and buntlines. Every square sail was set as flat as a board, and the sheets hauled home with the nicety of a man-of-war. Indeed, there was little to distinguish those East India traders from ships-of-war, except in the number of their guns, and in their crews, which amounted to about fifty men each, all told.

The anchor was at short stay with the head-yards braced up by the port-braces, while the sailors stood idly by the windlass, with the bars in their hands, awaiting the arrival of the captains of the two ships, who were transacting their final business on shore, and were expected every moment.

At length two white whale-boats appeared, throwing the water from their bows in a perfect foam, each captain trying to be the first on board. The men bent to their oars with a strength that seemed to threaten to break the bright ash in two.

As the spirited contest came to an end, the crews of the ships cheered lustily. The *Plover's* boat reached that ship's side a few seconds before the other boat reached the *Morning Star*. Captain Engle, of the *Plover*, was first on the deck of his ship, and, as he stepped over the side, he said to the first officer, "Hoist the gig, heave up, and away!"

Mr. Brent, the first officer, already had the boat's falls overhauled down, and twenty men were standing by to run the boat up. Before the captain reached the cabin, the boat was swinging at the

davits, and the click of the windlass could be heard as the sailors hove up the anchor with cheerful songs. Notwithstanding the captain of the Plover had reached the deck of his vessel nearly half a minute sooner than Captain Edgar, of the Morning Star, both ships tripped their anchors at the same moment, and both vessels fell off gracefully to starboard.

"Histy up, big jib, little jib!" sang out the Chinese pilot of the Plover, as the ship fell off enough for these sails to take. "Makee sich big topsail, putche him hellum midsky. Belly good! Now blacee lound foetopskill—ah, belly good!—putche hellum midsky belly little; makee square foetopskill—belly good! makes square big topskill an' missle topskill—so! so! belly good!—kiar all rightee! Misser Cappen, you payee me twenty-two dollaree all samee Melican fligate; suppose you come gen, me pilicky you all samee Melican sloopee war."

The pilot's important duties having been performed, that functionary quitted the ship, after wishing the captain, in his "pigeon-English," a good voyage and a happy meeting with his friends at home.

Both ships stood out of the river with the wind aft. Fore tacks and sheets were hauled on board, and the vessels began to slip along at the rate of five or six knots an hour.

After the Plover and Morning Star had made a good offing, had secured their anchors, cleared up the decks, and payed the chains below, Captain Engle ordered his first officer to call all hands to make sail, starboard watch on the starboard side, larboard watch on the larboard side, set all steering-sails except maintop-sail, set sky-sails and moon-sails, and get the water-sails out under the lower booms.

"I don't see our neighbor moving yet," said the captain, "and we might as well take the initiative"; but the captain reckoned without his host. Sharp eyes watched his movements from the other ship, and as the first man put his hand on the Plover's rail to spring aloft, the topmen of the Morning Star appeared in the rigging. The steering-sails from each ship went rapidly aloft and spread to their respective booms, looking as if bright wings had suddenly sprouted from the mass of canvas already set and bellying to the wind. Sky-sails and moon-sails next were set, and finally the water-sails; and in ten minutes' time the two ships were under a cloud of canvas, having set all the sail they could carry before the wind.

And now commenced the race in earnest. Each captain was ready to improve every honorable advantage that offered, in order to reach Boston first, and win the prize that awaited the victor.

The next thing was to set the watches, the first officer and boatswain taking the starboard and the second and third officers the larboard watch.

The watch on deck now went to work to secure the boats and everything about the decks, so that, in case of a gale of wind, nothing would get adrift, the other watch meanwhile looking out for the turn of the sails, until the duty was thoroughly performed. After the watch on board the Plover was once set, the watch below was not interfered with in any way; they could sleep or amuse themselves as they pleased, and were never turned up upon deck unless "all hands" were called, in an emergency.

There was no morning muster at quarters for exercise, as on board a ship-of-war; in fact, none of the numerous drills and exercises that occupy so much time and give the crew of a man-of-war so little rest. In a merchant-ship twenty men in a watch is considered a large crew, although in olden times vessels in the East India trade carried larger crews than elsewhere, as a defense against the Malay pirates that infested the China seas. These pirates, taking advantage of calms, would often board and capture vessels, and, after killing their crews, would plunder the ships and set them on fire.

The ships of the British East India Company were all large vessels, heavily manned and armed. They preserved all the discipline of men-of-war, which in fact they were for all practical purposes. The pirates never troubled these ships, but on several occasions they boarded and captured American vessels.

After everything was secured for sea, the captain of the Plover made a short speech to his crew. He informed them that a prize of five hundred dollars would be given to the captain of the vessel that should first arrive in Boston, a fact of which they were already aware; and that it was his intention, if he gained the money, to divide it among the crew. It wouldn't be much among so many, but they would have the satisfaction of winning the prize. He told them that they would find him always at his post, and that he should expect every man to follow his example; that he would never trouble the watch below except in cases of emergency, but that he expected the watch on deck to keep wide awake, and ready to jump when an order was given.

At the conclusion of the captain's address the crew gave three cheers, and went to their duty in good spirits, with the hope of getting half a month's extra pay at the end of the voyage, as the Plover was a crack sailer, and Captain Engle one of the best seamen and boldest sail-carriers in the East India trade.

The first of the monsoons had set in, and a fair wind as far as the Straits of Sunda was almost certain. They were already skipping along under their cloud of sail at the rate of eight knots per hour, the breeze freshening all the time. If the ships had been tied together, they could not so far have jogged along more evenly. One would occasionally forge ahead, but a little trimming of sails soon remedied that.

The nights were bright moonlight, so that they could sail close to each other and often exchange hails, and, when too far apart for that, the captains would signal to each other with flags.

Each day latitudes and longitudes were exchanged. The water was so smooth that hardly any motion could be felt on board the ships, and the passengers spent most of their time in lounging around the decks, or in reading.

For three days the ships jogged on together without taking in a single sail, and then only the moon-sails and sky-sails were furled, because the wind began to pipe up aloft in a manner that cautioned the first officer to look out for his "light dimity," if he didn't want to leave it in the China seas.

On the eighth day the Island of Banca, between Borneo and Sumatra, was sighted right ahead, and, when the vessels came up with it, the captain of the Plover, in the hope of gaining a little advantage, steered his course to pass to the eastward, while the Morning Star passed to the westward, but, when the ships opened to each other again, they still preserved their relative distance; and so they kept on till they approached the Straits of Sunda, between Java and Sumatra, when the wind began to freshen. As the ships had to haul up to pass through the straits, all the port steering-sails were taken in and the yards braced forward. Then it was that the two ships began to show their metal. Stanch and broad as they were, they laid their sides low in the water until they had reached their bearings, and then they seemed fairly to fly through the water.

Before leaving Canton, the ships had been fitted with heavy oak outriggers to the topmast cross-trees for the top-gallant and royal back-stays. Preventer back-stays leading well aft had been fitted

to the topmasts, boom-braces to topmast steering-sail-booms, and preventer-braces to lower yards and top-sails. It was evident that these would have to be depended on if the wind increased much more.

After passing through the Straits of Sunda, without taking in a stitch of sail, the ships were kept off for the Cape of Good Hope, which it was intended to sight.

It was the tenth day after leaving Canton that the two ships passed through the Straits of Sunda, keeping away and setting their starboard topmast and lower steering-sails, and then fairly commenced a race to delight the heart of a sailor.

The ships were flying through the water at the rate of fourteen knots an hour, and the sails aloft were complaining terribly at having so much work to do.

Neither captain would take in sail first, although it is certain that, if they had been sailing alone, they would have been more cautious. Already the main top-gallant steering-sail-boom of the Plover had snapped off, and the fore-royal yard of the Morning Star had broken in the slings. Then the lower steering-sail outhaul of the Morning Star parted, and the sail was hauled down. The lower steering-sail of the Plover soon followed suit, and the two ships were just as before, equally matched in sail.

Finally it began to blow so hard that the two ships were reduced to their top-gallant sails, still carrying topmast steering-sail, with the boom-brace as taut as an iron bar. Then the Plover parted her foretop-gallant-sheets, the sail splitting to pieces before they could get the yard down.

The Morning Star, not to be outdone, parted her weather main-top-gallant sheet; but as the men had the weather-braces, clew-lines, and buntlines in their hands, the sail was clewed down and saved. This was rather discomfoting to the Plover's men, who had not shown as good seamanship as their rivals.

Sail was carried heavily for three days after leaving the Straits of Sunda, and had generally taken itself in. Sometimes it was saved, more frequently not, until at last the two ships were reduced to single-reefed top-sails, whole fore-sail and fore-topmast stay-sail.

They still made thirteen knots per hour, though the sea ran high and the ships rolled heavily. They were yet side by side, neither having, to all appearances, gained any advantage over the other.

Great excitement prevailed on board both ships, and it required all the prudence the captains could exercise to prevent them from shaking out a reef, though the vessels were already carrying more sail than was really safe. A gentleman named Derby, who had made several passages in the Plover, remarked to the captain: "Let well enough alone; another reef will bring your ship's bow under. If you had less sail, you would go faster."

"Good advice," said Captain Engle, who had a high regard for Derby's opinion, and did not wish to lose so valuable a passenger in his future voyages.

That night the wind piped louder and louder, and, when the passengers turned out the following morning after a sleepless night, they found both ships under close-reefed maintop-sail, fore-sail, and fore-storm stay-sail, still preserving in a remarkable manner their relative distances of the preceding day, and each seeming as if about to be smothered in a sea of foam.

At last the high land of the Cape of Good Hope was sighted, and it was hoped that, when this barrier was passed, better weather would prevail; but, on the contrary, the weather grew worse, and the seas ran mountain-high. At times the rain fell in torrents, and Captain Engle at length began to show signs of uneasiness. He had lost all interest in the race, and now rather wished the Morning Star would keep farther off; but for the present this was out of the question, as both ships were obliged to keep right before the sea. Close as they were, they frequently lost sight of each other, owing to the high seas running between them. Often, when they would descend into the trough of the sea, their sails would almost be becalmed, and when they filled again the flapping would sound like the report of a field-piece, and at such times it was momentarily expected that the strong canvas would be split into a thousand pieces.

Every expedient, however, within a seaman's knowledge was resorted to. Three-inch ropes were made fast to the top-sail yards, taken outside the top-sails, and set up taut to the mainyard. The fore-sail was strengthened in the same manner, the ropes being covered with chafing-mats to keep them from chafing the sail. Relieving-tackles were rove, and men stationed at them, and there were now four men at the wheel, and the first officer stood near to give directions. Men were stationed at the maintop-sail and fore-braces to be ready in case the ships should broach to or be brought by the lee, and both ships carried several lights at night, so as to determine each other's position.

No matter how the hours passed, there was no change in those lights ; they looked to each like the fateful *ignis fatuus* leading them to destruction. The nights and days were long and weary. No cheerful faces were to be seen about the decks, and it would have been a relief to those on board the Plover if the Morning Star had even forged ahead, with a prospect of winning the prize.

But, no ; there she stood day after day in the same position, like a phantom-ship, and those on board the Plover could realize, from the motions of their companion, how their ship, too, was buffeted about by the mountain-waves.

After passing the Cape of Good Hope, the ships' courses were changed, so as to sight the Island of St. Helena, and take thence a fresh departure. It had been four days since any observation had been taken, on account of bad weather, and the islands along the course had been passed unseen in the darkness or thick weather which prevailed.

After the vessels rounded the Cape of Good Hope, the wind hauled after them, keeping astern and blowing still harder, if anything, until both ships began to suffer from excessive rolling. At one time it was determined to heave them to ; but, as this evolution is dangerous in a heavy gale, the idea was abandoned, hoping that better weather would prevail as they approached the line. In fact, so great had been the excitement on board of both ships in relation to winning the coveted prize, that neither captain was willing to heave-to unless the other would do so likewise.

The captain of the Plover signaled the Morning Star, "Had we not better heave-to ?" The answer came, "No, not as long as we can run !" That settled the matter, and the captain of the Plover determined to run as long as a stick would stand.

A few hours later, however, Captain Engle was almost sorry he had not acted upon his own convictions ; for, in a heavy lurch of the Plover, the starboard fore-channels gave evidence of weakness, and one of the chain-plates broke short off. However, in less than five minutes pendent tackles were hooked and set up, and the ship bounded on her course as if nothing had happened.

Shortly after, the starboard fore-chains gave further evidence of weakness. A spar of proper size was then got outside the ship, chain-straps were passed around it, and on through the scuppers, and secured with a toggle on the inside. Additional pendent tackles were hooked to this and set up, relieving the channels and starboard rigging of all strain.

During this work the men were much of the time under water, holding on for their lives, the seas pouring in over the bows in a perfect cataract. The sight was grand, but calculated to appall those unaccustomed to such scenes of danger, and even the heart of the old sailor who commanded the Plover would leap to his mouth as he saw the huge seas following behind, threatening to engulf the ship and all on board.

It was now the thirteenth day since passing the Straits of Sunda, and both ships gave evidence of having suffered a good deal in hulls and rigging. The barometer had not fallen for some hours, and there was a hope that the storm would abate. In the afternoon thick clouds gathered in the southwest, indicating that the wind was about to shift.

This is one of the most-to-be-dreaded conditions of affairs a seaman can meet with ; for, with the wind coming from a direction that will cause a heavy cross-sea, the waves already running mountains-high, there is always danger of a vessel broaching-to, or being brought by the lee, with a prospect of losing masts and boats, if not the ship itself.

Captain Engle, however, braced himself to meet the coming danger, and during two anxious hours all hands were kept at their stations. Indeed, both ships were fully prepared for the squall, which seemed rushing rapidly toward them.

The sky was as black as Erebus. Flashes of lightning shot forth constantly, illuminating the ocean, and showing the storm-tossed mariners the dangers that surrounded them.

As the first breath of the tornado reached the ships, the orders were given, "Brace round the fore-sail and maintop-sail !" so as to keep the sails full, and "Hoist the fore-storm stay-sail !" all of which was done ere the full force of the tornado struck them. The braces and preventer-braces were hauled taut and secured, and it was thought that a careful management of the helm would preserve the vessels from danger.

The wind blew so violently that the Plover's maintop-sail was blown clean out of the bolt-ropes, notwithstanding the precautions that had been taken to prevent such a catastrophe, but the fore-sail still held on. The Morning Star passed through the ordeal apparently unscathed. It was now four o'clock in the afternoon, and the Morning Star was about two miles ahead of the Plover, and had been slowly gaining during the day, but not enough to discourage those on board the sternmost ship.

The spoon-drift flew so thickly that it was difficult for those on board of one ship to see what was going on in the other, but the officers of the *Morning Star* reported that, just as the weight of the squall from the southwest struck the *Plover*, she was seen to lie down on her side and then suddenly fly off, bringing the squall right astern, and the heavy sea which had been following her was thus directly on her starboard beam—the position which is called “brought by the lee,” the most dangerous in which a ship in a heavy gale can be placed.

Those on board the *Morning Star* further reported that the sea seemed to be making a complete breach over her, that the foremast had evidently gone by the board, and that the main and mizzen topmasts had been broken off close to the lower caps.

There could, in the opinion of these seamen, be but one result, from the position in which the *Plover* was thrown, and the damage to the masts and sails—that was, the loss of the ship, with all on board.

The people on board the *Morning Star* were horrified when they saw what had happened to their consort, and the men instinctively jumped to the braces, in expectation that the captain would give some order, they did not know exactly what; but the experienced seaman shook his head mournfully, and sang out: “Keep fast, boys; it’s no use—we would only follow her example if we attempted to haul the ship by the wind in such a gale as this!”

But the order was given to get in the fore-sail, which split into fragments as soon as the tack was started, which could be seen flying away to leeward like a flock of scared sea-birds seeking shelter in a more distant clime.

The wind was now blowing fiercely from west-southwest, having shifted five points when the squall overtook the ships, and, passing diagonally across the track of the original gale, it raised the most dreadful cross-sea it is possible to imagine.

The only thing to be done was to keep the ship as nearly as possible before the sea, and hope that the maintop-sail and fore-storm stay-sail would hold on to the last.

The *Morning Star* was a new and very staunch ship, of nearly a thousand tons burden, and evidently a better sea-boat than the *Plover*, for, although she was knocked about like a shuttle-cock on the angry billows, and oftentimes threatened with destruction, yet she always rose from her struggle with the elements, minding her helm with the nicety of a yacht. She seemed to bid defiance to all the furious onsets of the gale. Considerable damage, however, had

been done. She had lost all the boats she carried at the davits, and all her spare spars had been washed overboard.

All the sail she carried was the fore-storm stay-sail and close-reefed maintop-sail. To further keep the ship from broaching-to, some tarpaulins had been secured to both sides of the fore-rigging to offer an opposition to the wind in case the seas should knock her off her course, which was now directly before the gale.

The wind now gradually abated, and every moment that passed seemed to assure the safety of the ship, until midnight, when the seas fell into a regular set. The weather by this time had so moderated that it was deemed safe to lay the ship-to, which was done in the most seaman-like manner. The main try-sail was braced as the ship came up to the wind, and the fore-storm stay-sail was hauled down, and the Morning Star lay easily throughout the rest of the gale.

Soon after the accident to the Plover, the darkness of night set in, and it was impossible to see anything of the ill-fated ship. After running eight hours, at the rate of ten knots, from the spot where her consort was last seen, it may well be imagined there was little chance of the Morning Star seeing the Plover when day broke.

Not a man on board the Morning Star closed his eyes that night. The sailors discussed with bated breath the probable fate of those from whom they had lately parted, and the dreadful news they would bear to Boston. No one had the faintest idea that the Plover had escaped destruction, and the ship's company was plunged in gloom and despondency.

Nevertheless, at early daylight, the men began to creep aloft as well as the wind would permit; but, on scanning the horizon, nothing could be seen to repay them for their pains—nothing but the wide waste of sea still lashing itself into fury, as if rejoicing over the victims it had swallowed in its insatiable maw.

Once a huge albatross came sailing down before the wind, and the seaman who had caught the glitter of his white wings sang out, "Sail-ho!" Every one looked in the direction in which the seaman pointed; but the albatross was almost immediately close to the ship, and, poising himself for a moment above the deck, he was swept away to leeward by the gale and soon lost to sight.

All that day the men were constantly aloft, looking to see if the Plover would emerge from the dusky atmosphere which rested upon the horizon.

The night set in gloomy and with fitful squalls, and all hope of ever seeing the Plover again departed from every breast. The watch

below sought their hammocks—the first time in fifty hours—musing over the sad fate of the lost ship, and blessing their stars that they were on board so staunch a vessel as the *Morning Star*, and under the command of a seaman who so thoroughly knew his duties as her captain.

The gale from the west-southwest lasted three days after the *Plover's* disappearance. The *Morning Star* was driven a long way out of her course, and on the third day was within three hundred miles of Benguela, on the African coast. Then the barometer began slowly to rise, and the wind to shift round to the southward. A new maintop-sail and fore-sail were bent, and the ship was once more on her course under top-gallant sails, and running merrily along before a fresh southeast trade-wind, and, with the exception of the loss of spare spars and boats at the davits, looking as snug as if nothing had happened.

Landsmen who read accounts of storm and shipwreck realize little of the horrors attending such events. They see a ship sailing out of port, bound to distant climes, with all sail set "alof and aloft," and picture to themselves the delights of the ocean. They are struck with the poetry of motion in the beautiful craft as she cleaves the waters, and imagine how free and happy must be the lives of those on board as they fly across the trackless ocean. Do they ever think of the peril to which those brave seamen are exposed in the storms that overtake them; how on stormy nights they have to climb the rigging and venture on the slippery yards; how they have to hold on for hours in the darkness of night ere they can get a sail reefed or a mast down?

Do they ever think how the seamen are oftentimes launched from a top-sail yard and drift astern, while with despairing voices they call for aid that can never reach them? What visions of home and loved ones pass through the mind of the despairing sailor, tossed on the angry waves, as he sees his ship leaving him to his fate!

What death on shore can equal in bitterness that of the sailor thrown from aloft, to buffet perhaps for hours with the relentless ocean? He may clutch the life-buoy which has been thrown to him by his friends, who are unable to give him any other help, but this is only a prolongation of his agony. Better far that he had sunk at once into the depths of ocean, than to cling to the life-buoy, from the support of which he must fall when the energy of life departs from him!

How few there are who, upon reading of the loss of a ship with

all on board, have the slightest idea of the heart-rending scenes that occur on such occasions ! Often the whole crew are launched into eternity without time to think, or to offer a prayer to their Maker. Some are in their berths, and awake only to be smothered in the rush of waters, hardly conscious of the fate that has overtaken them.

Some few of those on deck may be cast out into the raging ocean, clinging to some floating spar, to which they may lash themselves by pieces of rigging ; but who can imagine what suffering is depicted on their faces when perchance they are picked up dead by some passing vessel ! The sea is beautiful in its peaceful slumber, but dreadful in its wrath. Its depths are strewn with wrecks and human bones, but none can ever know the horror attending the last moments of those unfortunates whom the sea has consigned to premature graves.

After the gale had abated, and the *Morning Star* enabled to pursue her course, it was found that she had drifted to $5^{\circ} 20'$ east longitude and $15^{\circ} 30'$ south latitude. Now that the winds had resumed their original character, the vessel pursued her way without further trouble.

CHAPTER IV.

SORROWS.

ABOUT this time—December 1st—the family of Samson Goliah were expecting to hear of the arrival of the *Plover* with their loved one on board. They confidently hoped to have James home on Christmas-day, and great preparations were made to receive him. Agnes said to herself, “This is the last time we shall ever be parted, and this Christmas shall be the brightest of my life” ; and she moved about the house with an elastic step and a cheerful face that bespoke the happiness she felt.

Old Samson Goliah was full of life, and was teaching the two boys all those accomplishments in the way of olden sports with which he hoped to dazzle the mind of the fond father on his return home. Betsy Jane had knitted a dozen pairs of yarn stockings, so that James should not suffer from cold on his arrival. All was joy and sunshine in the Gale house—such happiness as is only felt

by those whose simple and unpretending lives are wrapped up in those within their own circle, and whose finer feelings have not been blunted by intercourse with the world.

Man proposes but God disposes, and who can tell what a day may bring forth? Here were people who had never known real sorrow up to this time, with their hearts beating with the fondest anticipations; and yet within a month they might well beg to be snatched from the miseries of life, since nothing would remain to them but the hope of kindly death as a relief to their distress.

About the time of the loss of the Plover, Agnes's joyful anticipations were dimmed by the death of her mother, who was taken off suddenly by pneumonia; but this grief was soon absorbed in a greater one. On the grave of her loved mother she had spread a wreath of flowers, which she watered daily with her tears. It was her first grief, and to her it seemed that her soul would never again be attuned to pleasure in this world.

How little she knew then what real grief was, and that the time would come when her eyes would be a continuous fountain of tears from morn till eve, and that she would pray for repose in death as her only hope for a reunion with those she loved on earth!

It was two weeks after the death of Mrs. Lagrange, when the village of Manchester was thrown into great excitement by the announcement in the local newspaper that "the celebrated French circus of Monsieur Jonson would appear for two successive days in the village, for the benefit of the inhabitants of Manchester and towns adjacent.—Admittance, twenty-five cents. Children under twelve, half price."

Besides the circus corps, there was published a list of rare animals, including an elephant and its young one (Miss Columbia), which had charmed the whole country with its wonderful infantile performances.

Samson Goliath was delighted at the idea of giving his two boys such a pleasure as seeing the circus, particularly as a live whale and a walrus figured in the list of animals, to say nothing of two live seals and a stuffed shark. Besides all this, there was a harpoon that had been taken from a whale in the Atlantic, after it had evidently been thrown into him in the Pacific Ocean. Samson Goliath was fully under the impression that he was about to recognize one of the harpoons that he had thrown at a whale during his last voyage to the South Sea, and the old man anticipated the pleasure he should feel in showing his two boys this memento of his prowess

in the days when he could throw a harpoon ten fathoms farther than any other man in the whaling fleet.

The children could scarcely restrain their impatience until the arrival of the circus; and when their grandfather drove them into town in the old family wagon to see the big show-bills posted up all over the village, their delight was unbounded.

Even Betsy Jane and the "help" at the Gale house were infected with the circus mania, and it was decided that all should go except poor Agnes, who was too subdued with grief at that moment to think of worldly pleasures. The boys could not sleep at nights for thinking of the wonderful things they were to see, and were up with the lark in the morning, to see if any of the *avant-couriers* of the show had arrived; while Samson Goliah examined the barometer twenty times a day, to see what was the prospect of good weather while the circus remained in Manchester.

At last the eventful day arrived, and Samson Goliah, having packed all his family, servants included, in the big wagon, drove to the village, and safely disembarked the party at the spot where the circus-tents were pitched.

The largest tent had plank seats arranged around the sawdust arena for the comfort of the spectators. A concourse had assembled from Manchester and the adjacent towns, more than sufficient to crowd the tents to their utmost capacity, for no such event had taken place in that vicinity within the memory of the oldest inhabitant.

The grand performance lasted from noon till two o'clock, and was pretty much like what is witnessed in our day, only it was on a more humble scale. The clown delighted the children with his brilliant witticisms, while the ponies elicited shouts of applause at their clever tricks. Every soul was delighted beyond expression, save and excepting Samson Goliah, who failed to identify the harpoon as having formerly been in his possession. He even went so far as to denounce the harpoon as a fraud, and insinuated that it had never been in salt-water.

The circus ended, as all pleasures will, leaving the spectators highly delighted. Samson Goliah promised his boys that he would take them to witness the show again before its departure; but the next day it rained heavily, and the weather continued bad until late in the evening, when the grandfather, having been taken ill, it was decided that the circus would have to be given up.

This was a severe disappointment to the two children, especially

as the evening turned out fine, and the sounds of the circus-music were wafted on the winds to the heights of the Gale house.

While the grandfather was waiting in great pain for the arrival of the doctor, and Betsy Jane and Agnes were busy in trying to alleviate his sufferings, the two reckless youngsters counseled together, and determined to take the privilege of going to the circus alone. So at six o'clock they started on a run for the village, urged on by the sound of the music, which rapidly grew louder as the boys flew toward the tents.

At length they arrived, panting with their run and excited with their adventure, at the tent-door, and entered with a crowd of other children, who paid their twelve and a half cents.

The two boys were well known in town for their striking beauty, and their straight and sturdy little figures could not fail to impress any one who had seen them. There was hardly a day that Samson Goliah could not be seen going through the shops in the village with one of these little fellows in each hand, and he never was known to let either of them get out of his sight. What was, then, the surprise of the citizens to see the boys wandering alone about the circus in search of a place where they could best see the performance !

Most persons supposed that at least a servant was in charge of the children ; and the *grande entrée* taking place just as they took their seats, they were for a moment lost sight of.

The boys sat next the place where the horses and performers entered the ring, and this passage led to another tent, where the wild animals were kept in cages. In the middle of the performances in the ring, and while the clown was delighting the audience with his antediluvian jokes, the little fellows slipped away unnoticed (it was supposed to see the wild beasts), and it was afterward surmised that some one in the interior had beckoned to them, and offered some inducements to them to leave the tent they were in.

But, be the cause what it may, certain it is the boys were never seen again in Manchester after that night.

If any one thought again of the children then, they supposed that they had been taken home by those who had brought them to the show ; and, when the performance was over, each spectator returned home, full of the pleasures of the evening, giving no more thought to the matter.

The doctor had meanwhile arrived at the Gale house, and, in

the course of an hour, Samson Goliah was quietly sleeping under the influence of opiates.

Betsy Jane and Agnes had been so occupied with the sick man that they had forgotten all about the children, who they supposed were on the porch ; but, when they went to look for them, what was their surprise and terror not to find them in any part of the house ! The garden was searched, and a man with a lantern went along the beach, and among the rocks ; but not the slightest trace of the children could be found.

The mother and the grandmother now became terribly alarmed, until a servant suggested that the children had wandered off to the circus, attracted by the lights and music, and that some of the towns-folk had taken charge of them, and would bring them home when the play was over.

The servants were ordered to hitch up the horses and drive into town, to bring the boys home as soon as possible, for all felt certain that they would be found at the circus.

The mother and grandmother waited anxiously for the return of the wagon, but hours passed without any news of the boys. Agnes became frantic with grief. It required all the philosophy of Betsy Jane to keep from giving way to despair ; for it was the first time in their lives that the boys had been away from home more than an hour or two at a time.

No one can depict the agony of these two women as they listened for the sound of the wagon-wheels. Again and again the grounds and the cliffs were searched ; but all to no purpose, and Betsy Jane and Agnes mingled their tears together.

At length, about daylight, the sound of wheels was heard coming along the road. "Ah !" exclaimed Betsy Jane, "here they come at last. God be thanked ! I shall scold the little darlings well for their prank. No doubt, some of the neighbors carried them home. How thoughtless of them, not to let us know the boys were in good hands !"

Agnes said nothing, but stood looking anxiously for the wagon to pass the turn leading into the grounds, when, not seeing the children, she gave a wild shriek, and fell fainting on the porch. Her heart had from the first foreboded evil, and she was prepared to hear bad tidings of her darlings.

Betsy Jane restrained her feelings as well as she could until the coachman drove to the door. The only answer he gave to her eager inquiries was : "The children can't be found nor heard of nowhere.

The whole town's been lookin' for 'em. They was at the circus; but all of a sudden they was lost sight of, as if they'd a-been taken up to heaven."

The homely way in which the man told his story was anything but consoling, and Betsy Jane gave full reins to her grief, in which the whole household joined.

Meanwhile Agnes, who had been lying in the arms of the house-keeper, who was applying all the restoratives at hand, came to, and hearing the last words of the hired man—who remarked that "some folks thought the children had been stolen by them circus-people"—she uttered shriek after shriek so painful that it was enough to unman the stoutest heart.

The man's words had a terrible effect on all who heard them. In the midst of the excitement, Samson Goliath came upon the scene, very pale after his illness, his gray hair streaming from under his woollen night-cap, and an old camlet cloak lined with red thrown over his night-dress.

"Where's the fire?" he cried; "who's hurt? Gracious heavens, what does all this mean?"

"My boys! my boys!" sobbed Agnes—"lost, stolen! I shall never see them again!" Again she was overcome with grief, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

"Who says my boys are lost while I live to find them!" shouted Samson Goliath. "How did they get out without me at their side? And to think that I should be sick, and unable to help them!" and he burst into tears, and sobbed like a child. "Keep the wagon, and wait till I dress," he cried to the hired man, and, hurrying on his clothes, was soon ready to start in pursuit of his boys. Meanwhile the bereaved mother was carried to bed, where she lay sobbing her life out.

When Samson Goliath arrived at the place where the circus-tents had stood, he found that the company had departed, bag and baggage, at daylight, with the intention of proceeding to Gloucester, about eight miles to the eastward.

The old man immediately started in pursuit; but, on reaching Gloucester, he could hear no tidings of the missing children.

The circus-people had seen them looking at the animals in company with a man dressed like a sailor, and in their opinion this person had stolen them away. There were several fishing-craft anchored off Manchester at the time, the crews of which had witnessed the circus performance.

Samson Goliah spent two days in Gloucester, making every inquiry, in which he was assisted by the selectmen and citizens of the town ; for every one felt deep sympathy with the old man, and shared his grief.

After doing all that was possible to obtain information, and fearing to go home and face the broken-hearted women who were anxiously awaiting tidings, Samson Goliah chartered a fishing-smack, and started in pursuit of his boys on the ocean, determined to overhaul every vessel on the coast until he could find them.

In this search the old, gray-haired man, with attenuated face and form, became known all along the coast as he boarded vessel after vessel, claiming to search for his lost ones. In almost every case a ready consent was accorded him ; and if any master of a smack hesitated to grant his request to search the vessel, the old man's flashing eyes and wild expression soon satisfied him that it would be better to comply ; for in his right hand Samson Goliah carried his trusty harpoon, the last one with which he had ever struck a whale.

At last he was satisfied that the boys were not on board the fishing-fleet, and so he gave up the search in that direction, and left the smack, to follow the pursuit on shore.

Hearing that the circus company were exhibiting in Portland, he proceeded to that place, hoping to surprise them while in possession of his boys ; but all in vain. He heard nothing of them, and, after an absence of two months, he returned home, to tell his unhappy household that he could bring no tidings of the lost ones.

He found Agnes in a most pitiable condition. All day long she sat with the children's playthings about her, waiting for their return, with tearless eyes rocking to and fro, and never speaking to any one. The morning light stole over the trembling brook, the moon and stars shone brightly in the heavens, the birds sang in the trees, and the ocean lashed itself against the cliffs, but it was all one to Agnes. She saw nothing, for her mind was almost a blank, resting only on one subject—the loss of her darlings.

When Samson Goliah returned home after his unsuccessful search, his friends hardly knew him—he had changed so much. He was wasted to a skeleton, his beard had grown long and unkempt, and his clothes were in rags. His countenance had a vacant expression akin to idiocy. Those who had seen Samson Goliah but two months ago, roaming about Manchester with his two darlings,

would hardly have believed that he was the poor, old, broken-down man that now drew their attention.

We sympathize with men when overtaken with the decrepitude of age, but when to this is added grief too heavy to be borne even by one in the vigor of manhood, it makes our hearts bleed to witness it.

The poor old man tottered into the parlor, where Betsy Jane was busily engaged in her usual occupation of knitting, and flung himself wearily into a chair and looked into the fire. There was still that cheerful blaze which always welcomed him home when he had gone abroad in chilly weather.

The logs crackled and the sparks flew up the chimney, but nothing elicited a remark from the old man. He was indifferent to heat or cold, hunger or thirst. He had eaten nothing for two days; but he did not realize the fact. A sort of instinct had led him back to the spot where all his joys had once been centered, yet he did not seem to know that this was the home he had so loved. It might as well have been a road-side inn as far as he was concerned. His mind was nearly a blank.

When Samson Goliath first entered the room, Betsy Jane raised her eyes from her work and wondered for an instant who this old man could be that entered so unceremoniously; but she soon took in the situation. In her mind's eye she could see the dear partner of her life undergoing every privation in the search for his boys, and she knew from her husband's character that he had not even taken the rest required by a young person, much less what was needed by a man of eighty-four.

She saw death stamped on his face, and all the love which she had harbored in her breast for over forty years gushed forth in a yearning desire to shield and protect her grief-stricken husband.

She rushed to his side, took his head and held it gently to the fond heart that had never had a thought but for the husband of her youth and his interests. She kissed him fondly, and said: "Poor, dear husband! Have you come home at last?"

The old man looked wearily up, but did not seem to recognize his wife, who burst into tears and sobbed as if her heart had never before known sorrow. The tears falling upon his face seemed to arouse him to partial consciousness, and he said: "Have the boys got home from the circus, Betsy Jane? It was wrong to let them go without me; something may happen to them. Have the wagon hitched up, and I will go and fetch them. Poor boys! they must

be hungry; they've eaten nothing for two days, and there's a rough-looking sailor trying to steal them. Hitch up the wagon, —I must be off, Betsy Jane, or the boys will wonder why I don't come." And so the old man wandered in his speech.

"Oh, my poor, dear husband, and is it come to this!" exclaimed his wife, her heart ready to burst. "Can it be that your once strong intellect is clouded?—O God! spare me this agony. Give back the mind of the one I have loved from youth, or, if he must be taken, let me not live through long days of sorrow and nights without rest, with nothing to soothe the hours of grief but memories of a love that's lost!—Come, my poor old husband," she said, "rest your tired head on the heart of your own Betsy Jane," and she passed her hands lovingly through his streaming hair and stroked his furrowed brow until he slept, murmuring constantly, "The boys will come back; hitch up the wagon; I must go for them, Betsy Jane."

For over two hours the old man slept on his wife's breast, and his sleep seemed so sound that the hired man was called in to aid in transferring him to the sofa, where he slept for some eight hours longer.

His tender-hearted wife sat beside him watching every movement. At length, somewhat alarmed at his long slumbers, the doctor was summoned; but he pronounced the symptoms favorable, and said that sleep alone would restore the old man's wandering senses.

When he at length awoke, he found Betsy Jane sitting by his side, bathing his brow. He knew his wife, and her heart beat with joy and her face glowed with a heavenly calm.

It would be useless to attempt to portray the misery of Agnes Gale when she was informed that the grandfather had brought no tidings of the missing boys, and her heart, already bleeding at every pore, sank to the lowest depths of despair.

There was still a small ray of hope that, on the arrival of her husband from China, a search, with the means at his command, could be instituted such as must lead to some result.

Time passed very slowly in the Gale house. Hours seemed days, and days lengthened to years. The coming Christmas was looked forward to with hope—hope that James Gale would arrive in the Plover, and devote all his energies to tracing out his boys.

It was necessary also for some one to take charge of the household, for Samson Goliath had fallen into a settled melancholy, and

was rapidly declining, so that in all probability another year would see him no more among the living.

Betsy Jane attended him constantly all day long. His pipe seemed to be the only resource now left him. He seldom talked, and then only to his wife.

"Betsy Jane," he would say, "I've been struck hard, and am nearly in the flurries, but give me line, lass, and let me sound—I may slip out the iron yet. Don't grieve; your old man is nigh on to eighty now, and God has kept us free of all calamities up to this time. We must shorten sail as squalls arise, and, by reefing in time, save our spars. I remember when you were young, Betsy Jane, and had your royals, sky-sails, and stun-sails all set, you were the prettiest craft I ever clapped eyes on. And now you are prettier in my eyes than you were even then. Don't grieve for the old man when he goes, but come to me as soon as your duty is ended on earth. I could not be happy even in paradise without you."

And so he would talk to her, she consoling him with all the love of a fond wife, and there is no greater blessing than that on earth.

On Christmas-day the Morning Star was signaled coming into port. It was a cold, stormy day, and the air was full of heavy sleet. As the vessel sailed up Boston Harbor under her three top-sails, she looked like a ship of ice from the regions of the pole.

Her rigging was a mass of sleet, her ropes were no longer of any use, and long icicles hung from the bights in fantastic shapes, sometimes dropping to the decks below, to the imminent hazard of the crew.

The sails were frozen stiff and covered with ice, so that no power could have furled them; and, as she reached her anchorage, the top-sail halyards were let go without clewing them up, the yards slowly descending to the cap, scattering the silver spray from the sails in all directions; while the top-sail-ties, which had not been let go for the last fifty days, seemed to object to letting the yards down to their natural rest.

The sailors, in pea-jackets and sou'westers, were covered with sleet from head to foot, and many of them were perfect representatives of the old vikings—

"Who, far in the Northern land,
By the wild Baltic's strand,"

led a life of spoil and murder, wearing away the winter nights with

many a wassail-bout. But these were harmless vikings; for, when their icy armor was removed, they appeared simply as sturdy sailors, worn with the necessary toils of a long and perilous voyage.

The anchors were huge masses of ice, and, as the ship came within a short distance of Long Wharf, the ponderous mass of iron on the starboard side was let go, the chain flew out, scattering masses of ice that had collected around the hawse-holes, and the Morning Star swung heavily to her moorings.

The ship had come in in charge of the captain, who had been unable to pick up a pilot off the coast. All the boats were out looking for vessels needing assistance, and the Morning Star had passed them without seeing them or being seen.

When the harbor-master came on board, after the first greetings were passed, Captain Edgar asked if anything had been heard of the Plover, and was answered, "No."

This may seem a curious question for a man to ask who had seen the vessel brought by the lee and the seas sweeping over her; but it must be remembered that the Plover was indistinctly seen just before dark, and those on board the Morning Star could form no idea what damage their consort had sustained. She might have lost all her topmasts and sails, yet with such a captain and crew as she possessed they would be replaced in two days, and she was so capital a sea-boat that it was hoped she might have escaped the heavy seas that at a distance seemed to be overwhelming her.

They had talked it all over in the cabin and in the forecabin, and hope whispered that the Plover might yet get safe into port.

Besides this, three days after crossing the line, when the Morning Star was moving with every stitch of sail set that she could carry, a large ship was seen ahead under a cloud of canvas, standing in the same direction. The first officer, after looking at the vessel from the foretop-gallant-yard with the best glass in the ship, sang out: "I believe, sir, that is the Plover. She has a new set of top-gallant-masts and her top-sails are all new."

On hearing this welcome news, the crew gave three cheers, for they would gladly have given up their chances of winning the prize to know that their consort was safe.

The sails were carefully trimmed, and every effort made to come close enough to the vessel ahead to remove all doubts on the subject; but, although at first the Morning Star seemed to gain rapidly on the other ship, the latter finally took a fresh breeze and drew ahead so fast that she at length passed from sight.

Great excitement, of course, prevailed on board the Morning Star; and so assured were many of the ship's company, that extra pains were taken during the night to trim the yards and carry sail to come up with the unknown ship. This was in $13^{\circ} 10'$ north latitude and $48^{\circ} 17'$ west longitude.

Next morning the stranger was seen again from the mast-head; but toward sunset she drew away and was lost in the gloom of evening.

"I see how it is," said the first officer; "it's those new sails of hers which thicken up as night falls, and she pulls away from us."

The strange vessel was seen running the same course as the Morning Star for several days, and once a large piece of bamboo floating by indicated that the ship was from China. Still later, a cork hat covered with linen drifted by, and seemed to settle all doubt. But after that night the strange ship was seen no more.

Captain Edgar rejoiced when he heard that he had won the race; but presently he grew serious, and his anxiety increased when, on the same day, the ship Condor arrived from Calcutta and the captain reported that he had seen a sail in $13^{\circ} 10'$ north latitude and $48^{\circ} 17'$ west longitude, and that he had seen her at intervals during four days. On the fourth day the Condor changed her course to the eastward, which accounted for her not being seen again.

The captain of the Condor reported that six days after the time the Plover met with her disaster, according to the account of the Morning Star, he was sailing under close-reefed fore-sail and main-top-sail, and nearly run over a quantity of ship's spars, rigging, and sails, which, as near as he could make out, were the foremast and foretop-mast and lower and top-sail yards of a large ship. The masts and yards were bright, and the sails were floating on the water, attached to them. This settled any doubts as to the Plover's fate, for those masts and spars were like those the Plover carried when she left Canton.

Mr. Rice, a passenger who had made many voyages to and from China, had always asserted that he saw the Plover's foremast go by the board when she was brought by the lee, and all on board the Morning Star felt sure he was right until they fell in with the Condor, which they hopefully took for the Plover; but now all hands agreed that the Plover was certainly lost.

Next day a ship arrived from St. Helena, and the day after one from Ascension; both reported that no ship in distress had put into either of those ports, which would probably have been the case

had the Plover survived the storm and lost her principal spars and sails.

Thus all doubts were settled, and the story of the loss of the Plover, with many embellishments, appeared next day in the Boston papers.

The owner of the Plover, after a careful examination of the facts of the case, put in his claim for insurance on the ship and cargo ; and so satisfied were the underwriters of the vessel's loss, that they prepared to pay the claim.

When Charles Gale opened the morning paper, the first thing that struck his eye was the announcement of the Morning Star's arrival, and the news of the loss of the Plover, with all on board.

His heart stood still, for he knew his brother had intended sailing in the lost ship, and his name was not in the Morning Star's list of passengers. His doubts were soon settled, for on that day he received two letters in his brother's handwriting—one containing the draft for sixty thousand dollars, the other a few lines announcing that he was about to sail in the Plover. The captain of the Morning Star gave Charles Gale all the particulars, and assured him that there was not the slightest hope of his ever seeing his brother again.

Charles immediately posted to Manchester as fast as a swift horse could carry him, without even stopping to tell his wife the dreadful news—which, however, she soon read in the paper.

In three hours after leaving Boston, Charles Gale galloped up to the door of his father's house. As soon as his mother saw his pallid face and trembling limbs, she felt that some new calamity was in store for them ; but she little thought it was one in which her own son was concerned, but rather feared it was some news of the lost boys—that they had been found murdered in some lonely place. In short, she imagined some horrible thing had happened to them.

Charles fell into his mother's outstretched arms, trembling like a leaf, and unable to speak a word. He had been chilled to the bone in his bleak ride from Boston ; his limbs were stiff, and his eyes looked as if all the life had gone out of them.

His mother led him aside, and, though anxious to know the worst that had happened, she thought first of her son's condition, and went to procure some hot mulled-wine to restore the circulation of his blood. At last Charles became more composed, and, looking at his mother with tearful eyes, exclaimed : " O my poor mother, prepare for news that will rend your heart. Fate has dealt

us some fearful blows, but this is the hardest of all. You, who are such a good Christian, will perhaps bow to the decrees of Providence ; but poor father will, in his present feeble state, sink under this new calamity, and you must muster up all your courage to hear what I have to tell you."

"New calamity !" said Betsy Jane ; "is it not something about the children ? Are they dead ?"

"Not that I know of," said Charles ; "there is still hope of their return ; the rewards offered by father and his friends, and by the authorities, will, I hope, produce them soon. But there is one yet dearer to you and to father who is lost to us forever."

"O James, James—it is James who is gone !" sobbed Betsy Jane, "my own darling boy !" and she sank, as if dead, to the floor.

She had felt the loss of the children most deeply, but hope had all along buoyed her up. She was as if stricken by a flash of lightning, and her future seemed a dreary desert, with dark clouds impending as if to overwhelm her.

She grasped her son's hand convulsively as he supported her in his arms and tried to console her. "Be brave, dear mother," said he ; "do not forget that you have been the main-stay on which we have all leaned from childhood. You must be the one now to soothe poor father in this bitter trial. He is old and frail—you are strong. The battle of life is but brief at most ; let us meet its vicissitudes with the Christian fortitude that becomes us. Suffering humanity as a rule is steeped to the lips in misery. Think of the millions on earth who long for heaven, yet are afraid to die ! Let us pray for strength to bear this fateful potion of what we deem a calamity, but which perhaps may be a blessing in disguise. We have been too happy hitherto ; life has gone too smoothly with us, and has glided through the years we have spent on this lovely earth like a calm stream flowing over golden sands. Had we pressed into the cup of life more of the leaves that give it bitterness, and thought less of its fragrant flowers and silvery waters, we would be better able to bear the depths of woe which sooner or later all must encounter. Come, be brave, mother, and be our comforter, for your Christian virtues are not mere bubbles that burst with the first passing zephyr. They are strong as adamant, and in adversity it is your vocation to sustain those who have not your self-control and fortitude."

Betsy Jane raised her dimmed eyes to those of her son, and said

meekly : " God's will be done. Now, Charles, tell me all—you will not hear a murmur from me again ; I shall pray for light in these dark and terrible misfortunes that have overtaken us, and thank our Redeemer for his assurances of a perfect hereafter to all who believe and trust in him. Now, tell me all : I can calmly bear the worst."

Then Charles, in a choking voice, told her all the events connected with the loss of the Plover ; to which she listened in silence, her sobs being the only evidence that she heeded what he was telling her.

" And is there no hope of the ship's reaching some port where she can be repaired, or may not the people be picked up by some passing vessel ? " she tremulously inquired.

" No, dear mother, there is no hope. I have made careful inquiries on every point. The Condor passed over the spot six days after the catastrophe occurred, and saw the spars of the Plover drifting before a heavy gale, in which no human being could live in a boat or lashed to a mast. There is no hope, mother ; poor James was drowned, with all on board the Plover ! "

Samson Goliath, who had been dozing on a sofa in the sitting-room, suddenly awoke, and, missing his wife, went in search of her. He quietly pushed open the door of the room in which Charles and his mother were talking. On hearing something Charles had said, the old man staggered forward, and, grasping his son by the shoulder, said : " What has happened ? Tell me my son James is not dead, and will return to me ! " and he sat down on the sofa by the side of Betsy Jane, who took his head in her arms and pressed it to that faithful heart that had been its resting-place in all its sorrows.

" O dear husband," said Betsy Jane, " God has dealt heavily with us, and we have lost another of the links that bound us to earth ; but we have yet much to live for—our dear Agnes and her little girl. Think what she will suffer when she hears this dreadful news ! She will suffer more than all of us, if she lives through it. We must live, to cherish and take care of her and her little daughter ; and they will need all our tenderness and care. Be brave, dear husband," she said, repeating the words her son had spoken to her.

" Ah ! lass," said Samson Goliath, " my line is all reeled out, and God is not merciful to me at the last. How have I sinned ? Betsy Jane, you ought to know ! Have I done aught amiss in my old age, to deserve this punishment ? At the end of my voyage, when I

returned home with a full cargo, my owners rewarded and thanked me; but now, when my voyage of life is nearly ended—for I'm eighty-four, Betsy Jane—God heaps misfortunes upon me. Yet, I've tried to keep up with you, Betsy Jane, and walk in his ways."

Betsy Jane put her hand gently on her husband's mouth. "Hush, darling!" she said; "no one knows God's ways, or what may be his intentions. Come with me." And she led him to her chamber, where they kneeled down and prayed together; and when Samson Goliah rose from his knees there was a calmness on his face that his wife never expected to see there.

Then the old man made Betsy Jane tell him all that had been told her by Charles. After which he said: "I will try and sleep now; this has exhausted me." While he lay upon the sofa, Betsy Jane passed her hand through his hair, and his cares were soon forgotten in slumber.

No one can tell the sufferings of Agnes that night when Betsy Jane broke the news of her husband's death. The unhappy wife hugged her infant to her breast and wept in silence. She had gone through so much sorrow that she could bear all the additional ills that could be heaped upon her. Life she thought had no further joys for her; yet, when she prayed that night, she thanked God for all his mercies, and thought of Christ's words to the afflicted. She was so crushed in spirit and in body when she laid her head upon her pillow, that she sank into a death-like slumber, and remained so until the rays of the morning sun streamed into her chamber, when, looking in the glass, she found that her beautiful chestnut hair had turned gray; but she welcomed these premature gray hairs as a fitting memento to the one she had loved best on earth.

That night the old man became very restless, and, by the time the doctor reached the house in the morning, he had a burning fever. The fever lasted a week, during which time Samson Goliah was wholly unconscious; but at the end of that time the fever left him much enfeebled, but with his mind clearer than before. When he recovered his senses, he looked wistfully at his wife, and said: "Ah! Betsy Jane, the old man is going, and leaving life not altogether satisfied that he has done right in this world, else why should God punish him so, and make his last years pass so heavily? I don't remember ever having wronged a human being. I may have struck a whale or two more than I could barrel up, but that's all. May God forgive me! You'll come after me very soon, Betsy Jane, when you've done all the good you can for Agnes and her child."

"Yes, I'll come soon, Samson Goliah," replied Betsy Jane. "I don't want to stay long here after you're gone, and so many of my joys are buried in the grave. But be quiet, darling, and try to sleep," and she ran her magnetic fingers through his hair, and he slept; but it was the sleep that knows no waking, for in the morning the old man lay cold in death.

The early sun shone through the closed window-blinds, and cast fanciful shadows on the chamber-walls. Around the house was a peaceful calm, and all nature looked so beautiful that one might say angels had cast a halo around the spot. Samson Goliah had departed this life without making any sign. He had suffered many griefs, but the dew of heaven had fallen into wounds that could not be healed on earth, and God called him away while he was calmly sleeping, with his hand clasped by the one he loved best on earth.

Betsy Jane had sat all night long watching her husband; at length she fell asleep also, and, when she awoke in the morning, she went on tiptoe to the door to attend to the duties of the day.

As she turned at the door to look at her husband, a beam of light through the shutters illuminated his face. Her heart ceased beating; she felt a dread she had never felt before. Although this was not the look of death she had witnessed in other cases, she knew that her husband was no more.

It seemed to her that bright angels were beckoning him to realms elysian, and she almost felt pain to think he had parted from her with a smile lighting up his face.

Betsy Jane did not shriek or faint, but she gazed upon the object of her youthful love as if he had been transfigured, and then, approaching, she laid her hand upon his cold forehead, and said: "Yes, this is death! I will follow you soon, dear husband." Then she clasped his hand and rested her head upon his breast, while her tears flowed silently. Thus she was found by the housekeeper at nine o'clock, and led away.

Captain Samson Goliah Gale was buried, three days after his decease, at the foot of his favorite tree, a wide-spreading white-oak, that looked like the monarch of all the trees around. Betsy Jane could sit at the parlor-window and look out on her husband's grave.

All the people within a radius of five miles attended old Captain Gale's funeral, for he was universally loved and respected. All knew of the sorrows that had hastened his end, and all had sympa-

thized with him while living, and regretted him now that he was dead.

Samson Goliah Gale, though born in humble circumstances, was perhaps better known for his virtues than many who make greater pretensions. His was a character for youth to emulate who hope to reach a green and honored old age.

How seldom do we see, in fashionable life, old age so honored and respected that the world will step aside from its pleasures to pay a sincere tribute to its memory! It may put on weeds and make a dismal show; may drop tears abundant as the dews of morn, to be as quickly dried.

But the world will glorify him who, from early youth and amid the vicissitudes of fortune, can boast of duties well performed and days well spent, whose healthy spirit finds gratification in all the works of nature; who hears voices in the whispering leaves—for such a one death has no terrors.

In that solemn hour, when the dying put up their prayers to their Maker, asking forgiveness of their sins, and not knowing upon what journey they may be bound, the angels sing their peaceful requiem around the just man's head, and fan his brows with their wings as he sinks peacefully to his eternal rest.

Such is the goodness of God to those who have kept his commandments and walked in his ways. Such a man was old Captain Gale, of Gale's Point.

Charles Gale and his wife had been staying at the Gale house all through the family troubles, and Mary was a great comfort to her sister amid her afflictions, which seemed greater than any one frail woman could bear. Within a few months she had lost her mother; then she had been bereaved of her two children; then came the news of the loss of her husband at sea; and finally came the death of that good old man who had proved himself a fond father to her, and who died before his time, owing to the loss of his grandsons—for up to that period his stalwart form was like the trunk of the sturdy oak on which the wind spends its fury in vain.

At length Charles had to return to his duties in Boston. His wife remained at the Gale house for a time longer, but eventually returned to her home.

Betsy Jane lived along, calmly attending to all her duties. When these were finished, she would sit, in fine weather, beside her husband's grave under the old oak-tree, communing with his spirit

until the shades of evening warned her that it was time to re-enter the house.

She gradually failed, owing to the advance of years, and from a longing to join the husband of her youth in those realms where she hoped to walk hand in hand with him forever.

At last she had to be helped to the grave by the old housekeeper. One evening, when the latter went for Betsy Jane, she found her lying with her head resting on the grave. She was dead, with a smile on her lips. She seemed to say, "I have joined him at last, and we part no more."

Betsy Jane was buried by the side of her husband, and Agnes was again bereaved, for she had greatly loved this gentle mother-in-law, who had been to her all that a mother could be. The only thing that now chained Agnes to life was the helpless child, which depended entirely upon her for protection, and who had never known, and never would know, a father's love. But for this child, she would long since have given way under the mass of affliction that weighed her down.

But fresh troubles awaited poor Agnes. A short time after his mother's death, Charles Gale came to his sister-in-law and told her that he had been offered the same position that his brother James had held in Canton, which was very fortunate, as he would have been obliged to go to China to settle his brother's private affairs; and, as soon as he could settle up his father's estate, of which he was the executor, he must depart. Mary, he said, had made up her mind to go with him to China.

Agnes had encountered so many sorrows, that she met this dreadful news—dreadful to her—with gentle resignation, such as she had displayed under her other misfortunes.

Her sorrow was only manifested in the still hours of the night, when only God and his angels could witness her bitter tears. She knew not what was to become of her, or how she was to live. She had no knowledge of business, or what arrangements would be made, in the settlement of the estate, for her maintenance.

She had, however, felt confidence in Charles Gale, and was satisfied that he would do all that was necessary in the premises.

It was finally arranged that Mrs. Holbrook, the housekeeper, was to remain with Agnes until Charles Gale's return, which would be in two years; that one of the hired men was to be retained also, and a young woman as cook; that enough money should be deposited in the Boston Bank to keep up the house; and that a lawyer

friend of Charles would call once a month, to see that everything was right.

Instead of sailing from Boston in the *Morning Star*, which vessel was about to leave for Canton, Charles concluded to embark from New York; and, after a most painful parting from Agnes, he and his wife and child took the stage-coach for that city, whence he wrote that he had engaged passage in the *Nimrod*, which was to sail in a few days for Canton.

When the time came for all those she loved on earth to be separated from her by the great ocean, Agnes's strength failed her entirely, and, worn out with grief, she took to her bed, where the faithful housekeeper tended her for many days with the most assiduous care. Even the cheerful prattle of her little Mary—so called after her absent sister—could not exclude the unhappy feelings which crushed her to earth; for, on parting with Mary, she felt as if all the world had deserted her.

A week after the departure of her brother-in-law, a New York paper came to Agnes with a list of passengers in the *Nimrod*, among them the names of her relatives; also a letter, by the pilot-boat, from Charles, bidding Agnes a final farewell, and describing the comforts of the vessel in which they had taken passage.

Agnes knew that she could not expect another letter from Charles and Mary in less than a year, unless the vessel chanced to put in at some port on her way to Canton, or meet some vessel on the passage bound to the United States.

It was a long time to wait, but she tried to be patient as the months went by without further tidings. At length, after more than a year had passed without any news being heard from the *Nimrod*, the newspapers began to speculate on the probability of her being lost. Finally, on a claim being made for insurance on the vessel and cargo, the underwriters paid it without demur. Where or how she was lost no one could conjecture; but, at all events, the ship was never more heard of.

Perhaps she had foundered in some great cyclone, or struck some hidden rock; perhaps she was destroyed by fire far from land, and, if any of her passengers or crew escaped in boats, they failed to reach the shore. In such cases conjecture is all in vain. No one can tell what fearful trials people who are "never heard of" go through with.

We lie in our beds during the stormy night, and hear the roar of the surf as it dashes on the rocks or sandy beach. We love to

listen to the murmur of the waves, and go to sleep with the booming of the ocean sounding in our ears. We do not often realize that a storm, which is music to us, is bringing disaster, perhaps death, to hundreds on the raging ocean; that this same storm, which is spending its fury upon our shore, marks a road across the ocean strewn with wrecks and drifting cargoes.

When the fleecy waves roll in upon the white beach, we little think what destruction they have wrought in the distance, and now laugh in glee at the mischief they have done, and, dancing over the sands, end their gambols by shrieking, in language only known to the spirits of the ocean, the sad tidings of the misery they have caused.

Those harmonious waves could tell, if they liked, how some ill-fated ship, her rigging all draped with ice, had battled long against their fierce attacks; how they had in very spite shattered the hull, while fierce winds broke the masts and rent the sails, until, crushed by the weight of ice and water, the vessel sank to those interminable depths which will give up their secrets only at the sound of the last trumpet, when all the mysteries of earth and sea will be revealed, and those who lie hid in the caves of ocean shall stand before the Father to receive their final sentence.

Listen to that sound of woe brought on the wings of the wind! It comes with lightning-speed from a hundred leagues away.

It is the last cry of the poor father, as he lashes his child to a broken spar, to save it from a more speedy death, while he submits himself to the ocean, daring the dangers of the breakers between him and the shore which neither of them ever reaches.

Only, perchance at daylight, some restless fisherman, who has no faith in the music of ocean, knowing too well the meaning of its treacherous sighs, stands aghast as he sees, lashed to a drifting mast, the form of a lovely child, its rounded limbs torn by the waves, its luxuriant curls mixed with the damp sea-weeds, its frozen eyes gleaming with looks of despair; while the fond father's form, bereft of life, is tossed to and fro among the angry breakers, while hungry sharks snap at his sturdy limbs, which but for these monsters might have borne him to the shore in safety.

Hark! what sound is that booming across the sea? It is the minute-gun! Another and another comes over the wild ocean, while the storms come down in all their force, and icicles hanging from the masts and shrouds gleam out amid the lightning's vivid flash! The rain falls hissing on the slippery deck, while the vessel, like a

frightened steed, trembles in all her timbers, leaping at every blast toward the rock-bound shore that waits to receive her in its cruel embrace.

No friendly beacon will burn on such a night as this, no friendly hand will launch a boat to save ; a boat would soon be swamped in billows frothed with rage.

The helmsman lashes himself to the wheel ; the captain sinks in the arms of death, covered with snow and ice. The ship drifts swiftly upon the rock-bound shore, which thrusts its fangs through the iron-bound ribs, and holds her there while overwhelming breakers wash from her decks all semblance of human form, save the lone helmsman lashed to the wheel, all stiff and stark, gazing with glassy eyes on the broken compass, as if struggling to head the vessel from the rough shore that he knew would give but bitter welcome.

See how the waves beat over the helpless vessel—those coward waves that spare not those who come within their grasp ! See how they gambol through the 'tween-decks and in the hold, throwing out the cargo, which becomes the flotsam and jetsam of the storm-torn beach !

These are some of the gambols of those melodious waves, whose music soothes us to slumber ; and it is only when we see the wreck, and follow the bodies of the dead mariners to their graves, that we can fully realize the treachery of the ocean.

The sound of the breakers at the Gale cliffs struck always mournfully upon Agnes's ear, and she would have left the place, had she any other home than this.

Here she was obliged to live, and there was still some consolation left in sitting under the giant oak, by the graves of those she loved, and thinking of the happy days of the past. She had lost everything by the sea. A sailor had stolen her two boys, and who could tell but what they had been carried to sea and engulfed in the maw of that insatiable monster, the same as the others she had loved ? Yet, although she hated the sight of the ocean, and everything connected with it, here she must live.

Perhaps her children might yet return, although it was now two years since their disappearance. Perhaps they would remember their homes, and some day escape from their captors, if they were still living, and come back to their fond mother.

She watched for them by day and dreamed of them by night. She lived on, and hoped always. And here, under the kind care of Mrs. Holbrook, we must leave her.

CHAPTER V.

THE NEW DETECTIVE.

TWENTY years have passed away since we left Agnes Gale and her little Mary sitting under the great oak near the graves of Samson Goliah and Betsy Jane. Our readers must now accompany us to New York, a city which even then seemed destined to become the emporium of the western hemisphere.

In 1820 New York, it is true, was but a village compared with what it is to-day. The suburbs were mere hamlets. There were no gas-lights in the city streets, but in lieu thereof a few oil-lamps just served to make darkness visible to the belated wanderer, and perhaps to assist the housebreaker and foot-pad in plying their nefarious trade.

There were no railroads in the country. Street-cars had not been dreamed of, but there was a fair proportion of dingy omnibuses and rickety hacks to convey passengers from one point to another within the city limits. After ten o'clock at night few of these were to be seen, except, perhaps, around the Park Theatre waiting for passengers when the performance should be over.

New York was nothing like the city it is to-day; and the most far-seeing citizen of that period could hardly have imagined what mighty changes would be brought about in sixty years.

We well remember New York in all its darkness and filth, with its narrow and crooked streets, that have been swept away by ravaging but beneficial fires. Its dens of thieves were worse, if possible, than those of London or Paris; for when rogues could no longer thrive in the great cities of Europe, they emigrated to New York, where they could rob and murder with impunity.

There were no police in those days worthy of the name. The guardians of the night were often old and inefficient men, who pottered about with lanterns in their feeble hands, which showed the thieves their every movement; and, when the streets became deserted, they went to sleep in some convenient doorway or boozed away their hours in a night-cellar.

In the days of which we write, New York city scarcely extended beyond Canal Street. There were few handsome public or private buildings, but any number of tumble-down rookeries that dated back to the Dutch dynasty, and were fit only for the flames. Now

the city extends to the Harlem River and beyond, with blocks innumerable of magnificent warehouses, and with private residences that vie with those of the princes of the earth.

In 1820 the wharves of New York were crowded with shipping, and many noble vessels might be seen flying the American flag; but the wharves on the North River extended only to about what is now known as Barclay Street Ferry, and on the East River to James Slip. Brooklyn in those days was barren of shipping, as were Jersey City and Hoboken. There were a couple of slow-going steam ferry-boats crossing from Fulton Street to Brooklyn, and one from Jackson Street to near the Navy-Yard, and two ferry-boats crossed the North River between New York and Jersey City. In short, the New York of 1820 was a primitive-looking place compared with the New York of 1884.

As traveling in those days was difficult and expensive, it was little indulged in by the people. There were no great hotels, such as are now seen in all directions. The "City Hotel," on Broadway, just above Trinity Church, was the favorite stopping-place, and was generally crowded from basement to garret. Its caterer, the famous Willard, known all over the country, dispensed the most bountiful hospitality, for which each traveler was expected to pay what was then considered the exorbitant charge of two dollars a day.

It is not our intention to write a history of New York, which could not be done within the compass of an ordinary volume; nor shall we endeavor to give an account of its progress in the last half-century—its millionaires and speculators, its magnificent buildings, its public parks and elevated railroads, and the thousand improvements that astonish the strangers that visit it.

We only desire that the reader should be carried back to the time when New York, although an important city, was but a village compared to its greatness now. Any one who had visited the place at the time we write of, and had not seen it since, would think himself in dream-land, and be prepared to believe that the wonderful stories of the "Arabian Nights" were not exaggerated.

Let the reader draw a line on the map of New York from the foot of Grand Street, on the East River, to the foot of Canal Street, on the North River, and he will see all there was of New York at the time we write about. There were some good houses building higher up in Broadway, but Bowling Green and its neighborhood were the resort of the rich and fashionable, and many wealthy people resided in the houses facing the Battery, whose

houses, once the resort of all that was gay and beautiful, are now turned into tenement-houses, or offices connected with the twenty thousand emigrants that come weekly from Europe to find a home on our shores.

The new City Hall was considered at that time a splendid piece of architecture, and its park was the boast of New York. On pleasant afternoons the fashionable people resorted to the park, and, alighting from their carriages, would promenade, listening to the music of some military band, no doubt imagining they were in a place only second to Hyde Park. But its glories have departed, and it has long since been overshadowed by the splendors of Central Park.

The City Hall was then the court of justice, where the mayor and the recorder, each in his appropriate sphere, carried out the mandates of the law ; and in Chambers Street, near by, might be found, without difficulty, by those disposed to appropriate the goods of others to their own use, the office of the chief of police, who wielded great authority, and who, if he had not the same power as the recorder to sentence, generally directed the punishment to be given to any offender that fell into his clutches.

One morning, in the spring of 1820, the chief of police was in his office, with a dozen watchmen and constables about him making their reports. Some twenty culprits were seated on a wooden bench, waiting for the chief to take up their cases.

The majority of these offenders represented human nature in its lowest depths of degradation, but two or three were young men who had been out on a lark the night before, and were accused of assaulting watchmen, breaking street-lamps, etc.

The chief of police gave most of them short shrift, and, being convinced in his own mind that they were a bad lot, he sent them up to the recorder, with a written statement of their offenses as they struck him.

The chief was a wiry, hard-featured man of about fifty, whose cold, gray eye seemed to look through and through the culprits brought before him, without a ray of sympathy for any human being.

He had a wife and family, and doubtless possessed some human affection, yet he looked as if it would give him the greatest satisfaction to send his nearest relatives to jail. Every time he condemned a prisoner he would take a huge pinch of snuff from a brass box, liberally besprinkling his ample shirt-ruffle—which was

picturesquely variegated with tobacco-juice, for he used the weed in all its forms, and was an accurate marksman with the spittoon for a target.

When the prisoners had filed out of the police-office, on their way to the recorder's court-room, the chief sat silent for some minutes, the constables preserving a respectful attitude near by. At length he said to one of them: "Look here, Charley, is this all you fellows did last night—picking up a lot of miserable devils not worth looking after? While you are haunting grog-shops, where this kind of vermin congregate, you lose sight of bigger game. If you think you gain a reputation for zeal by this sort of work, you are very much mistaken. You can capture a poor rabbit that is nibbling some rich man's cabbages, but, while looking for such mild game, the fox walks in and steals all the neighbor's chickens. In other words, while you are picking up a lot of poor devils who have drank too much and who would go home and sleep it off if you gave them a chance, you never, by any accident, overtake a burglar. While you are hanging around drinking-places, the burglars are robbing houses, breaking into stores, bursting bank-safes, and knocking people down in the streets. I see by the paper this morning that last night four private houses were robbed, two jewelry-stores ransacked, one bank-safe burst open, and three citizens knocked down and robbed in the streets."

The constables looked pale when the chief enumerated this list of offenses committed under their noses; but the man addressed as Charley spoke up, and said, "That's hawful news, if it's true, yer 'onner; but them newspapers often makes up that kind of stuff. I didn't sleep a wink all night a-watchin' every feller I seen goin' along the street."

"Nonsense!" said the chief. "I've had a detective go to all the places mentioned, who found every word of it true. There's a bag of tools in the corner there that the cracksmen left behind in the last place they visited. These fellows have bagged so much plunder they can now retire from business and join the church. They knew none of you could identify their tools to save your lives."

"Let me look at 'em, yer 'onner," said Charley.

"Oh, yes," said the chief, "look at them as much as you like; but you'll have to show more smartness than you've ever yet exhibited to find a clew from them."

"Them ain't American tools, an' they ain't Hinglish. They're forren tools, yer 'onner."

"Well, you ought to know, Charley," said the chief, with a grim smile, "for I guess, if the truth were told, you've used them at different times in your life."

This was a home thrust, for his comrades knew that Charley had served a term in an English prison for housebreaking, and had afterward been taken on the London police-force on the time-honored principle of setting a rogue to catch a rogue. After Charley had been shot once or twice and nearly beaten to death by his old pals, who were ever on the lookout for a chance to kill him, he thought it advisable to emigrate: so he came to New York with a recommendation from the London police authorities, and obtained a situation as constable.

Charley had been very useful in ferreting out burglars, and, if he had not captured many, he had made the fraternity so uncomfortable that they would sometimes suspend operations for a month at a time; and then they would break out with renewed ardor, much to Charley's disgust and the rage of his chief.

Within the past year there had appeared in the city a gang of daring burglars, who had spread consternation among wealthy house-keepers. They would enter private houses in spite of bolts and bars; walk into jewelers' shops and quickly penetrate the brick-and-iron strong-boxes where the valuables were stowed away; and they varied their pastimes by knocking down and robbing citizens after dark.

Nothing seemed secure against these rascals, and so far not one of the gang had been apprehended, or any of the plunder recovered. No banker felt secure, when he went home at night, that he would not come back in the morning and find all his money gone. He might have an extra watch for many nights in succession, yet in an unguarded moment the burglars would get into his treasure-vault. So it was with others. They might keep their silver in bank for months; but, if they took it home to use at a party, they were liable to lose it before the next morning.

It seemed evident that the thieves had accomplices in the banks, stores, and private houses; but none had ever been detected. Many gentlemen gave up wearing expensive watches and bought cheap silver ones, and left their pocket-books at home. But there were still plenty of imprudent men in New York who would carry large sums of money about their persons—won at the gambling-table, perhaps: so that fortunate persons were often made unfortunate before they reached their homes. They would be robbed almost to a certainty, and by a sufficient force to defy resistance. The victim seldom had

a chance to cry out; for, when he least expected it, a net with a *choker* attached would be thrown over his head, confining his arms so that no resistance could be made.

When the ancient watchman made his rounds, he often found one of these unfortunates lying on the ground with legs and arms secured and a gag in his mouth, but not otherwise injured.

Such was the state of affairs when the chief of police made his sarcastic remarks to "English Charley"—remarks which were intended for the benefit of the whole police-force then present.

"It's time this thing was stopped," continued the chief of police. "Here am I looking every morning like a fool when the news of these outrages is brought in, and a newspaper reporter comes for information and I can't give him any. Now, I tell you fellows, once for all, if you don't ferret out these rascals, and break up the gang, I'll discharge every mother's son of you. I hear that these fellows are even breaking into houses in the country, and have walked away with a lot of money and valuables in and about Catskill, where some wealthy people have built country residences. I have been applied to by the citizens up there for some clever detectives to help their constables ferret out the vermin; but I had to send back word that there is such a set of numbskulls on my force that I could give them no assistance."

"But, yer 'onner—" began English Charley.

"But me no 'buts,'" said the chief. "I've no time to waste listening to your excuses. Double your force by picking out the best men you can find to assist you, and I will foot the bill; but, by heavens! I must have one of these cracksmen within the week. When once I get hold of the end of a line, I'm much mistaken if I don't reach the other end before I let go. Now clear out, and remember what I tell you. I can find plenty of sleepy old watchmen who can pick up drunkards and vagabonds, but I want men who have sense enough to hunt down burglars and foot-pads."

When all his satellites had departed, the chief sat down to ponder over the situation of affairs. His eyes looked grayer and colder than ever. He looked into his snuff-box as if to find inspiration there, and ended by sprinkling half the contents over his shirt-frill. He opened huge bundles of papers and tied them up again, seemingly without coming to any conclusion, and at last sat with his feet on the fender, looking into the fire.

"Ah me!" he said, "I would give any money if I could fall in with a fellow like that French Vidocq I've heard about. I'd

soon rake these rascals out. But there are no such men in this country, and I doubt if there were ever any in France."

At that moment a loud knock was heard at the door of the chief's room; but he was so absorbed in thought that he did not realize the fact until the knock was repeated, when he called out, "Come in!"

One of his assistants put his head in at the door, and said, "A man wants to see you on important business."

"Who is he?" said the chief.

"He says his business is with you, sir," said the assistant, "and he don't feel called on to give his name to me, sir."

"Ah!" said the chief, "he wants to beard the lion in his den, does he? Did you tell him every one must send his name in to me?"

"Yes, sir, I did; but he looked as if he was a-goin' to throw me out the winder, which I'm sure he's quite able to do. You never saw such a man, sir."

"Poltroon!" exclaimed the chief. "Send him in here—I'll soon settle him."

"Yes, sir," said the constable, who murmured, as he walked away, "You wouldn't be a mouthful for him if he got his dander up."

A moment after, the stranger entered the office, and the chief, who was ready to rebuke him for his impertinence, opened his eyes in astonishment.

The new-comer was one of the handsomest men the chief had ever beheld. His features were perfect, with blue eyes, brown hair, and Saxon complexion, and his form was worthy of Achilles. He was over six feet high, and his whole person was so splendidly developed that a beholder would say, "This is a perfect figure of a man." He wore a full beard, and was dressed in a plain suit of brown cloth. He bowed gracefully to the chief, removing his hat as he entered the room.

Plain and unassuming as was this person's attire, he yet had the air of a gentleman, though his large, shapely hand gave evidence that it could toil when occasion required, and was unaccustomed to fashionable gloves.

The stranger began the conversation by saying, "Have I the honor of addressing the chief of police, of whose reputation I have heard the most flattering accounts?"

"I don't know that there is any particular honor, young man, in making my acquaintance; but you see what is left of a person

who once claimed to understand his business, but who, within the last month or so, has come to the conclusion that he has mistaken his calling, and is about ready to resign his office into abler hands."

Before the stranger entered, the chief had resolved to give him a wholesome rebuke for his haughty bearing toward the constable; but something in the intruder's looks fascinated him, and he was now ready not only to forgive the young man, but disposed to make him a confidant of his troubles.

"If," said the chief, "you have called out of mere curiosity to see one who has a greater reputation than he deserves, I must tell you I am so much occupied that I have very little time to spare; but if you have any business with me, I will listen patiently to you. I have noticed, however, that persons who make me complimentary visits have generally some favor in the background which they want to ask. You do not look like a man who would want to place himself under obligations, or would ask a favor for which he could not give a full equivalent. May I ask your name and business?"

"My name is Allan Dare," said the stranger, "and I am an applicant for a position on your detective force, if you have a place for me."

"You a detective!" exclaimed the chief, in astonishment. "Why, you look like a gentleman, and have none of the qualifications of a detective. Why, sir, your face would deceive no one, and a detective must be able to assume any number of disguises, which I am sure you couldn't do. The men for detectives are wiry fellows, who can alter their figures at will; they can grow fat in ten minutes by padding, and, by putting on shoes with two-inch heels, no one in the world would know them."

"Very true, sir," said the stranger, "but I have lately been a careful observer of the methods of your New York detectives. In the first place, there are very few of them; they are subordinate to the constables, and I can recognize any of them, dress as they may. Now I'll wager my life that I will assume a dozen costumes in which none of them will recognize me as the same man."

"You speak at random," said the chief. "But where have you been educated in the science of detection, for it is as much a science as any other?"

"Well, sir," said Allan Dare, "I will tell you. I have been five years on the detective force in Paris, and one year on that of London, and I bring with me letters from the authorities of those cities regarding my abilities in the detective line. I do not alto-

gether follow the business from necessity, but because my tastes lie in that way. I love to get hold of a tangled web and unravel it, and I have been very successful in France and England in unraveling some deep-laid burglaries and other villainous schemes."

"Then," said the chief, "you must be a young Le Coque. Do you know, just before you came in I wished I had some man on my force like Le Coque? Some good fairy must have heard me, and sent you here. But appearances are too often deceitful, and, although I have allowed myself to be won over by your advances and have treated you with less ceremony than I generally treat strangers, you mustn't expect me to place full confidence in you until I have some proof of your powers. My business makes me suspicious, and I see something to distrust in every man that approaches me. There is not one in my whole force to whom I give my confidence."

"That's because they don't deserve it," said Allan Dare, "and it's the best proof of your powers of penetration. Our worst enemies are often found within our own homes, and the greatest traitors are sometimes the most trusted soldiers. We do not suspect them, because we are blind to their imperfections, and do not find them out until we are betrayed. You haven't a man of honor on your force. They are all sordid men, working for low wages, and are open to bribery from the first man they arrest, who can probably pay them more money in a minute than you would give them in a month. Any kind of work requiring brains is better done by a gentleman than by a common man, on the same principle that a blooded horse will endure more than a common scrub. Now, referring to your police-force, there is a man on it named Charley, whom I knew in England. He was called there Joe Mizzler, alias the 'Smasher,' on the ground that he could break open any strong box in the country. He could hardly ever be found when wanted, and, if he was found, generally managed to prove an alibi. I know exactly what English Charley is fit for, as I have employed him and paid him well for his work."

"Then Charley knows you?" said the chief. "That's bad."

"No, sir," said Allan Dare, "he never saw me. Although I was five years on the detective force of Paris, I was never known to any one except the minister and the prefect of police, yet I held daily communication with the members of the force through a man of my own, who never saw me except in a sitting position and thoroughly disguised. I followed *à la mode Le Coque*, as the French would say."

"Ah!" said the chief, "so you are a disciple of that great man. But I hardly think French methods will work in New York. Our thieves are too cunning, and then everything in Paris is made of such gingerbread work that one of our cracksmen would go through it with a penknife."

"Undeceive yourself there, sir," said Allan Dare. "The French locks and bolts are much heavier than any in this country, and yet, so perfect are the thieves in the manufacture of their tools, that, with articles much smaller than those used here, they can do their work in half the time. I will show you a box of instruments used by a first-class French artist—or cracksmen, if you please," and he produced a neat box about six by eighteen inches. "This," said he, "contains thirty implements for the ordinary work of breaking into a bank or store. With these you can open all sorts of locks, and cut through the side of the heaviest iron strong-box."

"Amazement!" said the chief. "You carry all these tools about you, and I suppose know how to use them."

"Of course I do," said the young man. "I can use them as well as any burglar can."

"Ah!" said the chief, "how do I know, Mr. Allan Dare, that you are not one of the gang that have cut up such devilish pranks in New York during the last few months? Why shouldn't I arrest you at once?" and he put his hand toward the bell-rope connecting with the outer office.

The young man drew himself up to his full height, and his eyes flashed fire as he exclaimed, "Take *me* for a burglar, sir!"

"Well, yes; why not, when I find you an adept in the use of tools, and carrying a full supply about with you? You needn't look so fiercely, as if you would like to strangle me, for if you were to move a finger toward me I would settle you at once," and the chief pulled from his drawer a double-barreled pistol, which he held carelessly in his hand.

"God forbid," said Allan Dare, "that I should threaten you or any gentleman of your age and position; but I must confess that I feel indignant at being classed with burglars when I was doing all in my power to enlighten you in regard to the ways of these wretches. But, to show you how little I care for pistols, you are at liberty to fire at any part of my body you please. It will better convince you that I am what I claim to be than anything else. Fire away; you can't affect me in the least."

"Don't tempt me, young man," said the chief. "I generally take people at their word ; and if you say 'Fire,' fire I will."

"Fire away ; I'm shot-proof." And with that the chief fired his pistol at the speaker ; but Allan stood unmoved, and, although the chief half expected the result, he was a little surprised.

"Well," said the old thief-taker, laughing, "you have won my regard. I appreciate your indignation and admire your courage. Now, tell me what kind of armor you wear."

"I wear," said Allan, "a chain-steel armor, made expressly for me in Paris. It is very light, but will turn a musket-ball at ten paces. Although I have been hit by bullets on several occasions, fired at me by highwaymen and burglars, none of them did me any damage."

"Good," said the chief ; "I give you my hand, and I can't tell why, but I give you my confidence also. I spoke as I did to see if you would really feel the indignity, and I saw that your indignation was genuine. Now, sit down, and we'll talk matters over. You must tell me all the mysteries of the thieves' profession, in which I find I am not so much of an expert as I imagined. First, I want to know what special talent you possess to make yourself useful. I want a first-class detective, and you must be aware that there are certain qualifications a detective must possess to render him useful. The men I have on the force are mere bunglers, and I begin to fear I'm not much better myself. You seem to possess wonderful strength."

"Yes," said Allan Dare, "I have never met my equal in that regard." As he spoke, he took from his pocket a silver dollar and broke it in two with his fingers.

"That's very well," said the chief ; "but I've seen a juggler do the same thing. It only requires practice."

"Can you dispense with this poker ?" asked Allan, picking up, from the corner of the fireplace, a bar of iron about three quarters of an inch in diameter.

"Yes," said the chief ; "you may swallow it, if you wish. I have seen a juggler do that also."

"No," said Allan Dare, "I am going to do what no juggler can do, unless he is as strong as I am," and, as he spoke, he twisted the poker into a curl, as if it had been a light wire.

"Well again," said the chief ; "but I want to know how much you can lift, how many desperate men you can handle, and at what rate of speed you can travel."

"If you had all the necessary articles here," said Allan, "I could soon show you; but, in the absence of anything on which to exhibit my strength, may I ask you to step on to this small table?"

The chief, who seemed to be much amused at the performances of his new acquaintance, stepped from a chair to the middle of the table, and, folding his arms, said, "Go ahead, Mr. Juggler, and swallow me!"

Allan Dare grasped the table with one hand and held it at arm's length, with the chief in the center.

"That's better," said the chief; "but I saw a man, the other day, catch a thirty-two pound cannon-ball fired from a cannon."

"And yet that fellow could not probably hold that cannon-ball at arm's length. Have you a door anywhere about the premises that you could spare for a day or two, until another could be made?"

"Oh, yes," said the chief. "There is a two-and-a-half-inch oak-door, made to stand a siege. A crazy man ran his head against it the other day and dashed his brains out. So, I warn you, don't try that experiment."

"I intend nothing of that kind," said Allan, putting on a buckskin glove and walking to the door, where, drawing back his arm, he struck a tremendous blow, splitting the door into a dozen pieces and scattering the fragments over the floor of the next room, where the chief's assistant was quietly dozing, awaiting a summons. This worthy rushed into the chief's room to see what in the world was the matter, and found his superior laughing heartily.

"That will do, Mr. Dare," he said. "I am satisfied that you have strength enough for half a dozen detectives. If I allow you to go on in this way you will soon knock the house down."

"I would like to show you one more proof of my strength," said Allan. "Send in eight of your most powerful men and tell them to capture me, and if I don't capture them all and tie them, you need place no further confidence in me."

"No, thank you," said the chief; "I have seen enough of your strength to know that you would knock them all down like nine-pins. After you had used up my police-force, I should have to get a new set. I am satisfied that you are the strongest man in New York, if not in Paris or London."

"And now let me remark," said Allan Dare, "that these are not my methods of working. My *forte* is strategy. I never use my personal power except in self-defense. I make others do my work, and I select people to do it well. They never know who directs

them ; and, if they are once negligent, they are never so again, for I make an example of them that they never forget. My chief is the only one who will know my abode. When you want me, you need only make a small cross on the door, and I will come so disguised that no one can recognize me."

"I see," said the chief ; "I shall get the credit of being the most astute chief of police in the world, while recently I have made nothing but blunders."

"The most celebrated police-officers," said Allan Dare, "are those that have employed good detectives. Your system here is all wrong ; but I will assist you to so amend it that in one year New York will be the safest city to live in in the world."

"You speak foreign languages, of course ?" said the chief.

"Yes," said Allan, "I can speak French, Spanish, Italian, and German fluently, and I can write a variety of different hands that the best experts could not detect."

"The first accomplishment," said the chief, "is quite necessary, as we have rather a mixed population in New York. The other is of rather doubtful utility, but I make no objection to it. Now, tell me all about yourself. How did you come to adopt the profession of a detective when there are so many other occupations in which you could reach eminence ? Your personal appearance and address would be a fortune to you in this country."

"Before we go any further," replied Allan Dare, "permit me to call your attention to my letters of recommendation." As he spoke, he laid a packet of papers before the chief, who began examining them one by one.

"Ah, yes," said the chief, after a pause, "the police-commissioner of Paris speaks of you in high terms : calls you a second Le Coque ; the prefect says you are a wonder, and equal to Vidocq ; and the Lord-Mayor of London says you are at the head of your profession. What more do I want than these ? I consider you in my service, provided we can agree as to your salary."

"Let that be a matter for you to decide in the future," said Allan. "For the present I have plenty of means. Let me show you my worth first."

At that moment the assistant put his head through the opening which once boasted a door, and said that a gentleman had come to ask assistance. A murder had been committed in Duane Street.

"There," said the chief to Allan, "is an opening for you. I will give you every assistance in the way of detectives."

"That kind of work wants only one head to begin with," said Dare; "more heads would only muddle matters. Besides, to have any one with me would make me known. I must go and disguise myself, and will return and report progress. I may unravel the whole affair in an hour; perhaps it will take me three or four days; or I may fail altogether. If nothing has been touched, since the murder was committed, my work will be easier."

"The house is at No. 46 Duane Street," said the chief, "and I wish you success."

The young man departed on his mission, which was to establish in a measure his fitness for the profession in which he claimed to be an expert.

The chief of police now sat down to examine all the reports of the preceding night. He had passed a most pleasant morning in the company of the young detective, who, he had to admit, was his superior in a profession in which the public thought him well skilled. His mind was filled with pleasing illusions, anticipating the triumph he should feel in case his new ally should turn out all he claimed to be, and should discover the perpetrators of the Duane Street murder within a short time; for the papers of late had many remarks far from complimentary in regard to the police-force, and even suggested the necessity of a change in the office of chief of the force, intimating that a younger and more active man was required. It was even hinted that the robbers that infested the city were in collusion with members of the police-force, thus accounting for the impunity with which the villains carried on their operations.

These newspaper attacks affected the chief very much, and the anxieties and annoyances of the past few months were beginning to tell on him. The arrival of Allan Dare was therefore a godsend to him, and his eye brightened at the thought of how the good citizens of New York would stare when he got his new system, imported from London and Paris, fairly under way. The idea even occurred to him how pleasant it would be if his handsome daughter should take a fancy to Allan Dare, and he be able to call him his son-in-law.

At length he roused himself from his pleasant reveries, muttering, "What an old fool I'm getting to be! No wonder the newspapers think there should be a change in the head of the department. Here am I—who was never known to put faith in any one, who watch my men as if they were all rogues—pinning my faith

on a man I never laid eyes on before to-day, and who, for what I know, may be the greatest scoundrel on earth. I ought to feel ashamed of myself; and no doubt I shall, when this youngster comes back at the end of a week with a long cock-and-bull story, like the rest of them, the whole meaning of which being that he can't unravel the mystery."

While the chief was thus talking to himself, the assistant again made his appearance, saying, "Here's a card from a gentleman on very pressing business."

"Show him in," said the chief. "They all have very pressing business, and seem to think that I never want a moment's rest. Tell him, Dobbs, if he wants anything out of me, he must come straight to the point, for I never talk to any one more than five minutes." The chief was quite oblivious to the fact that he had just given three hours of his valuable time to Allan Dare.

"The Rev. W. G. Raymond," he said, looking at the card that was handed to him. "I wonder what *he* wants. Some canting hypocrite, with a subscription-list begging money to build a church, who, when he fills his pockets, will emigrate to Europe for a while, and then return to organize a new system of swindling the public. I will settle the fellow at once. I hate the whole tribe of beggars."

The entrance of the reverend gentleman put a stop to the chief's reflections. The new-comer was tall and bent with age, and was habited in a clerical suit of black. His hair was gray, and tied up in a long cue, and he wore a pair of violet-colored spectacles. The thick crape on his hat and his black silk gloves indicated that he was in deep mourning. The Rev. Mr. Raymond was altogether an ancient and picturesque-looking gentleman, somewhat shaky about the legs.

The chief eyed him sternly, and pointed to a chair, for he was satisfied that here was another wolf in sheep's clothing, of whom he had seen so many before.

"What is your business, sir? My time is very limited."

The reverend gentleman commenced, in a quavering and squeaky voice, with some remark about the weather, from which interesting subject he passed to the condition of his liver and the wonderful efficacy of Doctor Brick's pills, which had done him a great deal of good, and, under Providence, had been the means of prolonging his valuable life.

He had evidently reached that stage in his mortal career when, had he been a native of the cannibal islands, his friends would have

knocked him on the head and called all hands to feast on his carcass; for, although old and feeble, the dominie's bones were well covered, his good condition showing that he had consumed his full allowance of provisions.

The reverend gentleman consulted a huge silver repeater of the warming-pan pattern, gazing fondly at the relic (which might have been an heirloom) ere he returned it to his pocket.

"Mr. Chief of Police," said the old gentleman, "you will excuse me, but I am proud of this watch. It has been in the Warren family one hundred and twenty-four years. I move by this watch, and I wished to ascertain whether it is time for me to take my lunch. I find that I have just fourteen minutes to talk to you."

"I wish you would bear in mind," said the chief, impatiently, "that I have not had *my* lunch yet, having no great-grandfather's watch to guide me; and I want you distinctly to understand that I never allow any one over five minutes to talk to me on any subject. A man who can't say what he wants in five minutes can't say it at all."

"Dear me!" said the old gentleman, in a querulous tone, "and I've got so much to say about my matters that it will take me two hours at least. I'm a little forgetful occasionally, and I don't remember exactly all I have to say. Let me think a little," and he put his hand to his head in an attitude of deep thought.

"Will five dollars be enough to satisfy you?" asked the chief, still thinking the old clergyman after money to build a church.

The reverend gentleman started from his reverie. "Five dollars, sir!" he said. "Why, five million wouldn't satisfy me! I want justice against the rascal who has led my grandchild astray. Justice, sir, justice is what I want!"

"Then you don't come for money, like most of your cloth?" said the chief.

"Who told you I wanted money?" squeaked the old man, as he rose trembling from his chair. "My grandchild has been decoyed from me, and I want the villain who did it arrested;" and, laying his trembling hands upon the chief's shoulder, said, "Oh, for the love of your daughter, if you have one, restore my darling to me, for my heart is breaking!" and he burst into tears, sobbing like a child.

"But," said the chief of police, "you must first obtain a warrant from a magistrate before I can take any action in your case.

I can only, without a warrant, arrest people in the act of committing some offense."

"And what are all other offenses," exclaimed the old man, in a quavering voice, "compared with the abduction of the child of your heart—an innocent lamb that has been carried away by a ravenous wolf, who, after a few years of enjoyment, will throw her upon the world a degraded, broken-hearted creature? One who started in life with the purity of an angel, will return to me without the semblance of what she was. She will come back to her poor, broken-hearted grandfather; it can not be that she will sink to the lowest depths of degradation—no, it is impossible!" and at the thought he wept again.

The chief, though not given to the sympathetic, was visibly affected by the old man's sorrow, and said, "My dear sir, I will do all I can to help you. Tell me this man's name, and where he is to be found."

"His abode no man knoweth. I think he dwells with the prince of darkness. He is nowhere when wanted, and everywhere when not wanted. He is a wolf in sheep's clothing, a blot upon the earth. He has a fitting name for such a consummate villain. You will find it in the purlieus of vice: yet I once took that man to my heart and thought him all that is good."

"Come," said the chief, "don't excite yourself by these recollections, but tell me the man's name, and let me advise you what to do."

"His name," said the old man, "is Allan Dare, and I hope you will deal with him as he deserves when he is in the hands of the law."

"Allan Dare!" exclaimed the chief, jumping from his seat. "Why, the scoundrel! he has deceived me too. I know him, Mr. Raymond, and I will have him arrested at once," and he started for the door.

"Stop a moment, sir," said the old man. "When you get hold of him confront him with me, and, if the law fails to deal with him as he deserves, I will rend him apart with these feeble hands," and, picking up the poker which Allan Dare had so lately twisted into a corkscrew, he exclaimed, "I will straighten him out as I do this poker." With a sudden effort, the Rev. Mr. Raymond brought back the poker to its normal shape, bursting at the same moment into a laugh that was quite unlike the sounds that generally emanate from the throat of a feeble old man.

"Sold again!" cried the chief. "There is only one man in New York who can do that, and you are the man, Allan Dare. You convince me more and more that I am a mere tyro. But, heavens, what a disguise you are in, and what an actor you are! You would make a fortune on the stage. I shall now prize you more than ever."

"But," said Allan, "only two minutes ago you were ready to hang me."

"That's true. I have shown myself a credulous old fool; and yet I don't regret being deceived in this case, for I have shown you that I am not the cold, hard man people take me for, but have a little of the milk of human kindness left in me."

"Well," said Allan, "this is the disguise in which I did my work in Duane Street, and I came at once from there to you to report progress. The game is all ready to be bagged, and I think we have one of those ingenious robbers who have so long eluded your detectives. It's no wonder your men have been off the scent for so long a time, for they didn't look high enough. Crime generally lurks in the alums of cities, it is true, but it is sometimes found in drawing-rooms also; and this event has given me a hint that I will take care to follow up. I went in my disguise to Duane Street, and represented myself as a relative of the lady who was supposed to have been murdered. She was a Mrs. Ruggles, who occupied a suite of rooms in the house, and had her meals sent in to her from a caterer's. She was fashionable, reputed rich, and had valuable diamonds. I first requested that no one should be notified of the event until I had finished my investigations, and, when I showed my authority, the lady of the house entered into my plans. The room in which Mrs. Ruggles slept looks into Duane Street, with a dressing-room in the rear and a parlor on the right of the bedroom. A wide porch runs along the front of the house, on which open French windows from the parlor and the bedroom. A door in the entry leads out upon this porch. I found all the doors bolted and locked; but there was an upper window-shutter open, so that from the porch I could see everything in the bedroom. A French bedstead was against the wall opposite the window, on which lay a woman, her head apparently hanging outside the bed and with what seemed a deep gash in her throat, the bed being much disordered. There was a night-lamp burning near the bureau, one of the drawers of which was open. I found all the outside fastenings leading to this room apparently secure. I then unlocked the door with my screw-

pincers, but found that it was still held fast by a bolt. I then took a little magnetic instrument and ascertained the position of the bolt, and went to work with a drill to bore for it, but found that somebody had preceded me, and that a hole had already been bored by a similar instrument and the bolt shot with a pry; but the hole had been so carefully filled that it could only be detected by some one familiar with such practices. In digging out the hole which had been bored in the door, I came across this penknife-blade, which had evidently been used to shoot the bolt, but which had broken in the middle. I then shot the bolt and opened the door. It is needless to say that the robber, whoever he was, pursued the same method that I did to get into the room. I found the lady still living, but in a comatose condition. What looked like a gash in her throat was simply a red ribbon which she wore, and with which her lace night-dress was trimmed. On a chair by the bedside was a bottle of laudanum, from Wall & Short, druggists, labeled No. 20,164. The robbers evidently intended to kill the lady, and let the world suppose she had taken too much laudanum, but were frightened off before they had made all their arrangements. All the bureau-drawers were locked and their contents apparently undisturbed.

I had in the mean time sent for the lady's physician. He was under the impression that she had taken an overdose of laudanum, as she was in the habit of using the article; and I let him proceed upon that theory, as he had not evidently the least suspicion that a robbery had been perpetrated. I found that all her valuable diamonds she was in the habit of wearing had disappeared. I cautioned the lady of the house—who is a prudent, sensible woman—to keep an eye over the servants, and not to repeat anything to any one. As to the patient, the doctor says she is all right, although she has had a narrow escape; but it will be a long time before she will be able to explain matters. I found, on the floor near the lady's bed, a small diamond breastpin, such as men wear in their shirt-bosoms. On the back of it are the initials 'K. W.' This is important, if the lady says it's not hers when she is able to answer questions. I then questioned the lady of the house as to the other inmates of her establishment. She said that the only boarders she had besides Mrs. Ruggles were a Mr. Edward Cole, who had been with her two years, and two maiden ladies named Koontz, who had a suite of rooms in the back of the house similar to those occupied by Mrs. Ruggles in front; that Mr. Cole was a nice gentleman of thirty, who had a parlor and bedroom on the third floor;

that he was often absent on business, and was then in Philadelphia. All the boarders had night-keys, and came and went as they pleased. No one sat up for them, but a lamp was kept burning in the hallway at night.

"I then procured the pass-key to Mr. Cole's room, and examined it carefully. It had not been occupied for some days, the landlady stated, and there was no appearance of the bed having been recently disturbed. The chambermaid said that she had aired the room daily during Mr. Cole's absence, dusted the furniture, mantelpiece, etc., and put fresh water in the pitcher.

"Were these cigar-ashes on the mantel yesterday when you dusted it?" I asked; "and was this burned paper in the fireplace, and were these dirty pair of boots and soiled shirt-collar in the closet?"

"La me! no indeed," said the surprised chambermaid; "none of them things was there yesterday. A clean pair of boots has been took and them ones left in their place. But Mr. Cole don't smoke, an' he never do have any tinder-box in his room; leastways I never seen any; an' that there collar ain't his'n; it's marked "K. W.""

"That will do now," said I. "I dare say all these things were here, but you didn't see them."

"That's all I have to report for the present. I'm sure we have our man, but so far I have no idea where the jewelry is. We must watch every night till we capture Cole, as he lets himself in with a night-key, and we must have that chambermaid shadowed by some one that will live in the house. I'm sure the woman knows more than she will tell."

"Well," said the chief, "you are a trump, and have found out more in an hour than my whole police-force would have done in a week. I believe we are on the track of this new gang of burglars, who are evidently directed by a master-hand. Perhaps this fellow Cole may be the one."

"No," said Allan, "Cole is a mere bungler, for the very steps he took to conceal his operations betrayed him. Had he remained in the house he would not have been suspected, and there would have been no proof against him. He was, no doubt, in the house on the night of the robbery, and perhaps had a confederate with him. He will probably return home to-morrow night, when he can be arrested. The chambermaid may put a letter in the post-office. Put the post-master on his guard, and we can find out

Cole's hiding-place. Don't let the news of the arrest get into the papers. Put off an examination as long as possible; run the risk of a suit for damages, but don't make the matter public. I have warned the servants at the house to be discreet. They are under the impression that Mrs. Ruggles took too much laudanum. None of them know anything about a robbery. The chambermaid is the only one I suspect. Put on your best men in this case, and I will see whether they do their duty intelligently."

"You are a wonderful man," said the chief, "and will make me famous; but I hardly think you will deceive me again with your disguises, for whenever I see a big man of your shape anywhere I shall think of you."

"You are mistaken," said Allan Dare, "if you suppose there are no men in New York with my thews and sinews. I know three men who are so near my size that you could not distinguish any difference. At least one of them could, I believe, tie me hand and foot without my being able to prevent it."

"Who can they be?" said the chief. "I'm sure I don't know them."

"Never mind their names just now; we shall know more of them anon. But I am beginning to get hungry, not having eaten anything since six o'clock this morning."

"Come with me, then, to Peter Stelle's," said the chief, "for you have certainly earned a good dinner. Peter is the best cook in the city. How he will stare when he sees me in clerical company, for I am not credited by the citizens of New York generally with much piety."

So off they went together, and for the present we will leave them in a pleasant frame of mind discussing their dinner.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VANDEUSEN BALL.

ON the 16th of March, 1820, the fashionable people of New York were excited over a grand ball that was to take place that night at the residence of Amos Vandusen, the millionaire, president of the Manhattan Internal Improvement Company, a joint-

stock affair that had lately sprung into existence. Mr. Vandeuſen was one of the leading citizens of New York at that period, foremost in every enterprise calculated to benefit the city, and was much respected by everybody.

Crime had of late ſo increased in New York, particularly in thoſe portions that were badly lighted, that the citizens were ſeriously conſidering whether it would not be well to follow the example of London and Paris and light the ſtreets with gas. Among the leading advocates of this ſcheme was Mr. Vandeuſen. The great expenſe attending its introduction was the chief objection, although many old-faſhioned people were frightened at the very idea of gas, contending that fire would run through the pipes and ſet fire to any building where the new-fangled illuminator was introduced—that thoſe who were not burned up would be aſphyxiated by the noxious fumes, and that the introduction of gas would be a death-blow to the tallow-chandlers and to the whale-fiſhery. Numerous other arguments equally rational were advanced by the opponents of the plan.

The poor people ſaid that gas was well enough for the rich, who turn night into day, but what advantage could it be to the working-man, who toils all day, and after ſupper is glad to go to bed by the light of a tallow-candle and ſleep until daylight calls him up to renew his labors?

So the excitement raged; and Mr. Vandeuſen, who had been ſo liberal in his charities as to have obtained the reputation of a public benefactor, bade fair to loſe all his popularity in his attempts to carry out the new project. Such is too often the fate of a popular idol. His followers are always ready to pull him down from his pedeaſtal if he dares to run counter to their prejudices.

But Mr. Vandeuſen was a philoſopher who underſtood the value of popular applauſe, and followed his convictions regardless of public clamor. He kept on in his pet ſcheme of lighting the ſtreets of New York, certain that it would greatly benefit the city and add to his own private fortune.

Mr. Vandeuſen had amasſed ſo large a fortune that, for what anybody knew, he might be worth five or ſix millions of dollars—an almoſt unheard-of ſum in thoſe days. He was a gentleman of the old ſchool. In fine weather he uſually appeared in a blue coat with braſs buttons, a white waſtcoat, and light trousers, with white-topped boots. His hair was well powdered, and worn with a long cue; and, as he leaned upon his gold-headed cane with both hands

when riding down Broadway in his open barouche, he was recognized by thousands as a gentleman and philanthropist.

Mr. Vandensen had a lovely wife and an only daughter, and, while he loved and venerated the former, the latter was the idol of his heart. He owned a handsome residence near the Bowling Green; but, as the city was moving northward rapidly, he determined to build a house in that direction that should eclipse anything that had yet been seen in New York.

In accordance with this idea, he had consulted the best architects, and the result was a beautiful marble edifice, seventy feet front and one hundred feet deep, in the center of a fine square of an acre or more, embellished by the best landscape gardener that could be found.

The house was furnished in French style, most of the movables being imported from Paris. All the appliances of the house would have done credit to a palace. Huge crystal chandeliers were pendant from the ceilings; the marble steps which led to the front door were flanked by gigantic lamps—in fact, all the arrangements were superior to anything ever seen before in New York.

Thousands of people came to admire this magnificent residence, which, although grand, had nothing pretentious about it; and here it was that Mr. and Mrs. Vandensen proposed to give a ball or house-warming on the night of the 16th of March.

Many months had been spent by the family in furnishing the house as the various articles arrived from Europe in the packets. All the best upholsterers in the city had been employed, and men were busy in putting down carpets, hanging curtains and draperies, unpacking china, etc.

Mr. Vandensen invited all who had participated in furnishing and ornamenting his house to a handsome breakfast in the great dining-room. Said the mechanics, "If he feasts *us* this way, what will he do when he gives the nobs a tuckout!"

The stables attached to this magnificent mansion were in no way inferior to the other accompaniments. Adjacent to the house were several unoccupied lots owned by the millionaire, on one of which he proposed to erect a house for his beloved daughter Eugenia when she married, an event that he hoped she would postpone for some time. Having married from love himself, he intended that his daughter should marry the man of her choice, even if poor, provided he was a gentleman and a man of honor.

Around these unoccupied lots a high and close board fence had been erected, effectually concealing the inclosed area.

The public could not conjecture the meaning of this inclosure, into which bricks, mortar, and sheets of iron had been constantly carried, and where workmen of different trades entered at all hours of the day.

No one could tell what all the hammering and clattering were about, for the workmen were paid for keeping silence on the subject; and, when they at last finished their labors, the inclosure was locked, the watchman on guard driving away all intruders.

Many were the speculations indulged in by the crowd that daily assembled near the inclosure as to the object of all this hammering. Some said it was a private circus for the benefit of the poor, for Mr. Vandeußen was famous for his liberality in giving circus-tickets to poor children, and in other ways contributing to their happiness, including in his benevolence even the poor outcasts of the streets. His heart was as large as his house, and he never inquired into the character of any small pattern of humanity that applied for a ticket.

Of course, everybody "in society" was anxious to go to the ball, and Smith, the popular sexton of St. Vitus's Church, who had charge of all the details, was importuned from morning till night—but Smith had received strict orders from his patron to allow no one except those on the invitation-list to enter his house on the night of the ball, and Smith well knew that it was for his interest to see that these orders were strictly obeyed.

On the eventful night a line of carriages commenced arriving at Mr. Vandeußen's door by eight o'clock, for people in those days kept more sensible hours than they do at present, and after a ball went home and retired to bed in time to get some sleep, and eat their breakfast next morning at a reasonable hour.

Our forefathers were a hardier race than we are, owing to our late and irregular hours. We may try to recover the strength we have frittered away at balls and operas by using dumb-bells and Indian clubs, or by making believe row an imaginary boat—which is, perhaps, the silliest thing of them all; but of all the exercises, practiced by old and young to build up a shattered constitution or develop latent strength, nothing can compare with the habit of keeping early hours, and breathing the pure air to be found in an early country walk.

As the carriages drove up to the door of the mansion, all were

astonished at the brilliant illumination. The sidewalk-lamps and those on the marble steps made the surroundings almost as light as day, and the house, from garret to cellar, was so brilliant that the first thought of everybody was that it was on fire!

This was the proudest moment of Mr. Vandensen's life. He had here exemplified the beautiful effects of gas, and the simplicity and safety of using it. The high fence on the unoccupied lots inclosed his gas-retort, where he could make gas enough to supply a hundred and ninety burners, equal to at least two thousand wax candles, and at much less expense.

As the guests entered the brilliantly lighted rooms, it was some time before they could become accustomed to the glare. "Charming!" "Heavenly!" "Gorgeous!" "Splendid!" were the words heard on every side as the ladies tripped up the grand staircase, which was bordered with choicest roses and other flowers.

Nothing has ever appeared, even in these days of luxury, superior to the up-stairs reception-rooms of Mr. and Mrs. Vandensen. As the ladies put off their wrappings, each received from an attendant a bouquet of the choicest flowers; and as the gentlemen left their dressing-rooms to escort the ladies down-stairs, they were each presented with three choice rose-buds, which they pinned to the lappels of their coats. The hostess had thus arranged her drawing-rooms to represent a floating parterre, since every individual was more or less bedecked with flowers.

The ceilings were literally covered with flowers, and the pictures on the walls might be seen peeping from alcoves of roses. In the front room were several landscapes of great merit by Gainsborough, Wilson, and Morland; one or two Claudes were there also, and some gems by Gaspar Poussin. These were in beautifully carved oak and gilt frames.

In the middle room were pictures by Ostade, Teniers, and Huysman, and in the third room were animal pictures from the easels of Stubbs and Gilpin.

The rooms on the opposite side of the house were equally devoted to art. In the front room were classic compositions of the French school of David and his followers. In the library were portraits of the host and hostess by Lawrence, and original portraits of celebrated persons by Reynolds, Stewart, Cosway, and Romney; while the great dining-room was hung with choice proof-engravings by Audran, Edilneck, Woollett, Strange, Sharp, Bartalozzi, Vivares, Chatelain, and many others.

Any one at all conversant with art could not but feel that, in the selection of his pictures, Mr. Vandeußen had exhibited rare taste. In the different rooms were also some beautiful works in marble, copies of the antique mostly, with a few originals by Flaxman, David d'Angers, and Canova. The library contained some ten thousand volumes of rare books, in magnificent bindings by Roger Payne, Hayday, and other celebrated binders.

The furniture and upholstery corresponded with the other adornments, and was rich beyond description, without any tendency to gaudiness. Everything was in keeping.

Mr. Vandeußen's face was wreathed in smiles as he mingled with his guests, having a word to say to every one. His wife and daughter were receiving their visitors in the large reception-parlor, and they too looked happy at the success of Mr. Vandeußen's scheme of illumination, which was a success beyond their fondest hopes.

Everybody of prominence in the city was at the ball. Even our old friend, the chief of police, who could seldom be induced to join in such festivities, was present with his wife and handsome daughter, who was escorted by a tall, fine-looking man of thirty, whom the chief introduced as Mr. Edgar Wilde. This group, like the others, was soon lost in the crowd, expressing, like the rest, their wonder and delight at the enchantment with which they were surrounded.

There were representatives present of all the old families, descendants of the Dutch settlers of New York. The Stuyvesants were in the ascendancy as regards numbers, though hardly in the way of dress, which in their case retained a good deal of the old-fashioned simplicity. Still, on account of their descent from the illustrious Peter, they were regarded with awe and veneration as the foundation-stone of New York aristocracy. The Livingstons assumed to be, if anything, of purer blood than anybody else, had greater wealth, and mustered so strongly in numbers that half the people seemed to be named Livingston.

The Van Winkles were there in full force. These were descendants of that doughty hero, immortalized by Irving, who took such a long nap in the Catskill Mountains. Though somewhat shiftless, like their illustrious ancestor Rip, they were accounted the "*crème de la crème*." Now, alas! the family has died out. The introduction of gas, steam, and other new-fangled notions was too much for their conservative souls, and they perished rapidly.

There figured also at the ball a whole tribe of Vedders, descend-

ants of the patriarch Nicolas Vedder, who was landlord of the "Golden Schnapps" in colonial days, but who lived to see a republic established and his native village flourish, with much custom coming to his door. The Vedders were a haughty race. They went to the Vandeusen ball, and considered they paid the plebeian host a great compliment in entering his house.

It was noticed, however, that many of the Vedder young ladies were wall-flowers that evening, and that the young men didn't know how to dance.

The Vandutchers were so numerous at the ball that they formed a quadrille all to themselves. Their antique costumes attracted much attention, and the *nouveau riches* part of society suggested that these were the dresses worn by the Vandutchers in the days of the great Peter Stuyvesant, and that the family had no other.

The Vanderdonks, who had not been on good terms with the Vandutchers, agreed for this night to bury the hatchet and unite to put down the *parvenus* that had come to the surface within the last twenty-five years. We regret to say that this ancient family were little noticed during the evening, and that the wall-paper in their vicinity was somewhat rubbed by their leaning against it. The Vanderdonks solemnly declared they would go to no more plebeian assemblies.

It was in reference to these patricians that one young lady remarked, "If you call that aristocracy, I want to remain in the lower ranks."

Among the visitors announced were Mr. and Mrs. Charles Morton and their daughter, who here made her *début* in society. As these people will occupy a prominent place in our story, we will introduce them to the reader.

Mr. Morton was at that time the leading banker of the city. He was a fine-looking man, with iron-gray hair and a slight stoop in his shoulders; his age being about fifty-five years. His wife, an elegant woman, looked as if she might be his elder daughter, so lightly had time passed over her. Her eyes were as bright as they might have been in youth, and her beautiful chestnut hair was without a trace of gray.

Mrs. Morton had a smile for every one as she pressed gracefully through the throng, her magnificent diamonds glittering in the light.

Her daughter Louise, who accompanied her, had just come from Madame Faucet's finishing-school, and, as we have mentioned, this

was her first entrance into society, in which she was to take her position for good or evil, according as she might follow the path marked out for her, or pursue her own inclination, indifferent to the opinions of the world.

It would be difficult to describe the impression Louise Morton made on society on the night of the Vandeußen ball. "How beautiful she is!" "What a figure!" "What eyes!" were the involuntary exclamations as she passed through the throng to the ball-room, her proud eyes flashing as she heard with undisguised pleasure the encomiums passed upon her.

Behind her came the beautiful Mrs. Eton, *née* Fanny Strong, who had been married about six months to a rich merchant, who, although but forty-two years of age, looked like an old man.

It was the old story in this case—*dazzled by wealth*; for she had never known anything but simple competence. Fanny Strong had given her hand to Mr. Eton with the full knowledge, on his part, that her heart was given to Arthur Seabury, and that she could never love another.

Yet her face was smiling as she moved along by her husband's side, for was she not the cynosure of all eyes, and did she not eclipse Mrs. Morton, the great banker's wife, in her diamonds, and was not her dress imported from Paris, the handiwork of Madame Damaisé, who had made the coronation robes of the Empress Josephine?

Mrs. Eton's taste was perfect, and people marveled greatly how one brought up in what might be called a humble sphere of life could have acquired such polish of manners and such adaptation to the rules of fashionable life. But this lady was an apt scholar, and nothing gave her husband greater pleasure than to see her lovely form decked in diamonds and laces, luxuries that his purse could well afford.

It was but two days before the evening of the ball that he had presented her the necklace she wore, which he had purchased at a cost of forty-five thousand dollars. She had but to smile upon him, and he would have poured the value of one of his India ships into her lap.

Mrs. Eton had, before her marriage, returned to her lover all the souvenirs he had sent her, together with a kind letter, in which she told him that she was unworthy of so high and noble a character as his, and was unfit to struggle with poverty, which would have been her fate if she had married him. She advised Arthur

to seek out and marry some rich girl, and bury his love in the luxuries to be enjoyed from the wealth of a rich wife, for, "Oh, Arthur!" she wrote, "you do not know the happiness to be enjoyed from wealth by those who have known nothing but privations all their lives."

Then she advised him not to attempt to renew their intimacy, for that, now she was to marry a rich man, their ways of life would be apart; and then she added, "I would not give Mr. Eton any cause of complaint for the world. I can not love him, but he is a dear, good old man, and has presented me a diamond engagement-ring worth six hundred dollars, and has settled six thousand a year 'pin money' on me. Now, Arthur, if I married you, we should be obliged to live in a cheap boarding-house, and I should spoil my hands in sewing on buttons;" then she wished him a kind good-by and "all sorts of happiness in this world and the world to come."

When the youth read this letter, he fairly foamed at the mouth with rage, for what is more humiliating to a man who has given a woman his love, and believes himself loved in return, than to receive a letter such as we have quoted, as if every moment of his future would not be imbittered by a knowledge of her falsehood.

So far Mrs. Eton had given her husband unalloyed happiness, for, although he was so much older than she, he had not dreamed that her love for Arthur was more than a passing fancy, or that she now thought of any one but himself.

If he had watched her anxious eyes as they passed through the throng in approaching the ball-room, he might have wondered who it was she was expecting to meet. Her bright eyes, which generally looked so full of light and happiness, were now dimmed, and she was silent as she threaded the throng, which was lost in admiration of her charms.

Suddenly her cheek flushed and her heart leaped as a gentleman advanced and politely saluted her and Mr. Eton, and, after a few commonplace remarks, asked the honor of her hand for the quadrille.

"May I, darling?" she said, addressing her husband, who, won by the endearing epithet, said, as she took the gentleman's proffered arm, "Certainly, my dear; go and enjoy yourself."

"Look here, Deville," said Mr. Eton, "I put my wife in your charge while I go to the billiard-room. You know I don't dance, and it is very warm here with all these gas-lights. *Au revoir*,

petite." Mrs. Eton kissed the tip of her glove to him, while her left hand pressed slightly her partner's arm.

"What a time I have had catching sight of you!" she said to Mr. Deville as they sauntered off, not to dance, as the husband supposed, but to reach the conservatory at the farther end of the ball-room, where aromatic odors and subdued lights were inviting those addicted to "flirting" to enter.

"And you really looked for me?" he said. "Why, I thought it ages while I was waiting for you to come, and I was afraid some one would claim you for the dance before I could find you."

"Oh," said she, "I have so much to say to you! Do you know that Mr. Eton is perfectly in love with you? He says that you are the rising man of New York, and would not wonder to see you the great millionaire of the city before ten years pass over your head."

"I am extremely gratified," replied her companion, "at Mr. Eton's approbation, and hope his beautiful wife will always hold me in as high esteem as her husband does."

Mr. James Deville was a banker who had arrived from Europe only some eighteen months previous to the date of the ball, and established himself in a handsome building on Broadway, which he had fitted up in a style then very unusual with places of business. He had constructed the most elaborate brick-and-iron treasure-vaults in the city, locked and bolted in such a way that it was thought they would defy the assaults of the most experienced burglars—a most important consideration at a time when burglaries were frequent and successful.

Mr. Deville was a man of the best credit "on 'change," and would discount a note at a fraction less than any other banker, which fact made him popular and brought him a great deal of business. He speculated too, and was almost always successful—a fact which reassured those who might otherwise have mistrusted him.

Deville was considered one of the handsomest men in New York. He was over six feet in height, and, if the gods had wished to design a person to embody all that was manly and powerful, they could not have succeeded better than in this instance. He excelled in all manly exercises; was the best boxer and the most expert pistol-shot in New York.

In form he was a Hercules, and in beauty of feature he might have been classed with Antinous. Indeed, the latter was the sobriquet bestowed on him by the fair sex, with whom he was a gen-

eral favorite, and many a lovely woman lavished her smiles upon him, but to which he was often indifferent.

While Deville was adored by the women, he was a favorite with the men, who felt no envy at his expertness. He so far exceeded others that he had no rivals, and stood alone the Admirable Crichton of his set.

Although the women smiled upon him, the husbands were not jealous, for he always kept his attentions within the bounds of propriety; and, as he paid no more attention to any one of the reigning belles than he did to another, it was surmised that he had some secret attachment in Europe to which he was constant.

He was a welcome guest at every entertainment, and was the life of a party. But at times a fit of despondency would come over him, when he would fall into a reverie amid the gayest scenes, seeming to forget that any one was near him.

No one knew whence Mr. Deville had come. They only knew that he had arrived in a packet from Liverpool, with plenty of means to establish himself in business.

As he presented no letters of introduction, the careful merchants for a time looked askance; but, by the force of his character and his apparent integrity, he succeeded in overcoming their prejudices. No one doubted that he was a gentleman by birth, for his manners were polished and his address was most agreeable.

His features were so handsome that painters begged him to sit for his likeness; but, although, as it might be supposed, he was not without vanity, Deville always refused to gratify them, on the ground that he had not time to spare.

Every lady of his acquaintance would have been glad to secure a copy of his picture to hang up in her boudoir; and yet, although he knew this, the promptings of his vanity were not strong enough to induce him to sit for his portrait.

He had a remarkable pair of dark-blue eyes, forming a striking contrast to his chestnut hair, which clustered in curls around his forehead.

Mr. Deville occupied a handsome suite of rooms in Park Place, and sported an English dog-cart, with a high-mettled bay horse, and a little "tiger" in top boots.

Every morning the dog-cart appeared at Deville's lodgings, and at nine precisely he entered his office, where all his clerks were expected to be at work.

Although no one knew who Mr. James Deville was, there was

nothing mysterious in his movements. Everything he did was open as the day. All his transactions were fair, and, when he had beaten an adversary in some speculation, he would reconcile matters if there was any grumbling, even if at his own loss.

No man could be otherwise than popular under such circumstances.

Mr. Deville and Mrs. Eton entered the conservatory, through which they passed arm in arm amid rows of exotics, until they paused opposite a fountain ornamented with a marble figure of Niobe. The water flowed in torrents over the sad face and draped figure into the basin where tiny gold-fish were swimming.

A subdued light from a gas-jet with a pink globe was cast over the scene, while farther on could be seen other fountains, with fauns and naiads equally beautiful and tempting to those who loved such delicious retreats.

The music from the ball-room came faintly on the air of the conservatory. It was a place a young man and a young woman should have avoided, unless they were of a philosophical temperament, or prepared to converse on scientific or literary subjects.

The two people that stopped at the fountain of Niobe were for a few moments seemingly lost in their own thoughts.

"Shall we sit here, Mr. Deville?" at length said the lady. "It is so beautiful, and this quiet murmur of the water makes one feel a distaste for the noise and confusion of the ball-room. I don't want to leave this enchanting spot. You will find Niobe, too, such good company in case I should prove stupid. Let us rest here."

"I will sit where you please," said Deville; "any place where you may be is enchanting."

"Fie, you naughty man; you know you didn't mean that. It's your set phrase for every woman in love with that handsome face of yours. But you must not talk nonsense like that to me, for you know I don't believe it; and then what would Mr. Eton say if he knew what you have said to me?"

"Why, my dear lady," replied Deville, "he would no doubt agree with me, for I am sure he thinks so every hour of the day. I would not hesitate to tell him to his face that you are the most enchanting and lovely woman in the world. He would be delighted at the compliment paid his good taste in selecting you for his wife."

"Ah, yes," she said, "but I don't want you to say that to any one but me. To say it to him would look as if it were only one of

those pleasantries that you men of the world are constantly uttering without meaning anything. But these things are sacred with me, and I am simple enough to think that they are all meant."

"Simple indeed!" thought Deville to himself. "I wonder whither she is going to lead me."

"My good lady," he continued, "while I hold you in the highest esteem and think you the loveliest of your sex, yet I would never utter a word in that innocent ear that you might not repeat to your husband; in fact, I would be willing to repeat it to him myself."

"But I don't want you to repeat it to any one," said Mrs. Eton, "for then your words would no longer have any charm; and, besides, what does my husband know about the poetry of life? He has no real sentiment, and, although he loves me after a fashion, he looks upon me as a pretty bauble that he has bought to adorn his mansion—a woman who will give him *éclat* in society and who will make his house agreeable to his friends. He loves to have it said that he has the prettiest wife, the best furnished house, the finest horses, and gives the best dinners in town—and that's all he cares for. He gives me a box at the opera, because he knows that all the *lorgnettes* in the house will be leveled at that box; and he likes the best men in the city to be seen there, because it adds to his importance. But he always stays at his club until a few moments before the opera is over, and then he comes to escort me home, where we sit and gape at each other until it is time to go to bed. Mr. Eton is past the sentimental age; and do you not think, after sacrificing myself to him when I might have married a younger and handsomer man, that I am entitled to be complimented by those I appreciate without Mr. Eton's being told of it? I know that I am the handsomest woman in these rooms; my glass tells me so; and I know that my diamonds cost twice as much as Mrs. Morton's."

Devil could hardly help smiling at this womanly conceit as he replied, "Yet you are as careless of your diamonds as if they were but a trifle. They must have cost at least ten thousand dollars."

"Ten thousand dollars!" exclaimed Mrs. Eton. "Why, Mr. Deville, you don't think I would wear a necklace worth only that sum while Mrs. Morton wears a set worth thirty thousand dollars, and Mrs. Livingston wears a *parure* worth twenty-five thousand, and several other ladies of my acquaintance have sets worth fifteen thousand? No, sir, Mr. Eton would not permit that. Why, the set

I have on my neck cost forty-five thousand dollars at Bullion & Co.'s, and my ear-rings and the diamonds in my hair are worth ten thousand dollars more."

"Lovely neck and sweet head!" said Deville; "worthy of all the diamonds that can be put on them."

"Ah, flatterer!" exclaimed the lady, playfully tapping him with her fan.

"But," said Deville, "are you not afraid of losing the wealth you carry about with you? Suppose your clasp should give way while dancing, and your diamonds should be trampled under foot! You might never recover one half of them."

"Well, Eton would give me more," she replied; "and it would make a startling paragraph in to-morrow's papers, and that would compensate him for the loss."

Deville shook his head. "Oh, no, my sweet friend, Eton would do no such thing. When a man buys his wife a set of diamonds it is a good investment, provided the diamonds are of the first water, for they constantly increase in value. They are generally kept in bank, where they are perfectly safe. Once or twice a year they are worn at a gathering such as this, the husbands taking good care to have detectives around dressed like gentlemen; and about the only risk is through the carelessness of the wearer. If you were to lose your diamonds, Mr. Eton would be so much out of pocket, and it would take all the profits on one or two cargoes to make up the deficiency."

"I wouldn't care if he lost the profits on half a dozen cargoes," said Mrs. Eton; "and it is just so much time thrown away talking all this about a lot of diamonds. I appreciate them less than ever since you tell me they are a safe investment of Mr. Eton's money, for I suppose if he got into a pecuniary difficulty he would not hesitate to sell them."

"Of course," said Deville; "they are always the representatives of fifty-five thousand dollars."

"Then," she said, "they are nothing more than a badge of slavery, into which I have sold myself, and they don't belong to me after all. Did you ever read *Æsop's Fables*?"

"No, my dear friend," replied Deville, "but I will do so if it will please you."

"You dear, sweet fellow," she said, "you are so good! But I must tell you the fable: A mastiff met a hungry wolf, and stopped to have a chat. In the course of conversation the wolf complained

of the difficulty of getting along in this cold world, where victuals are scarce and good society hard to get into. Upon this the dog expatiated on the blessings he enjoyed, being fed on the fat of the land and sleeping in a dry, warm kennel. 'Come live with me, friend wolf, and see how you like it.' The wolf agreed to the proposition; but, as they jogged along, engaged in pleasant conversation, the wolf spied a place on his companion's neck where the hair was all chafed off. 'What causes that mark on your neck, my friend?' inquired the wolf. 'It's nothing,' replied the other, 'but the mark of a collar which I have to wear when they chain me up in the day-time; but it doesn't inconvenience me at all.' 'Oh, ho!' said the wolf. 'Well, I want none of your collars; freedom and a bone now and then are better than slavery with a panful of meat every day. Mr. Mastiff, I wish you joy of your collar, and bid you good-day!' Now, Mr. Deville," she continued, "this diamond necklace is my badge of servitude, and, since I know it is merely a good speculation of Mr. Eton's, it bears right into my flesh, and I feel like trampling it under my feet. There, don't let us talk any more of this hateful necklace. Tell me some of those pretty things you repeated to me in my boudoir the other day. Just say:

"When amidst the gay I meet
That beaming smile of thine."

Deville laughed. "All that you have said may be true," he replied, "and I pity the man who holds so fragrant a flower in his hand and is not able to enjoy it; but I should fail in my duty to Mr. Eton if I did not assure myself that your necklace is securely fastened. Let me see to that, and I will say as many pretty things to you as you desire."

"I have no objection to that," she said, turning her swan-like neck toward Deville, who proceeded to examine the clasp. As his hands touched her cheek she nestled her pretty face caressingly against them, and her color, coming with the momentary excitement, made her look more beautiful than ever.

"There," he said, leaning over her, his lips almost touching her cheek, "I knew you would lose them. The guard-chain was unhooked and the clasp only half fastened;" and she heard a little "click," as if the clasp had closed with a snap. She looked up to his face, her eyes beaming with kindness and her trembling lips unable to speak her thanks. He knew, then, that he might dare to do as he pleased, but he only kissed her gently on the forehead

and rose to his feet. She clasped his hand and covered it with kisses.

"There, *ma petite*," he said, "your necklace is safe, and it will be your own fault if you lose it and incur your husband's anger. And now that you have been such a good child, I will finish the verses you commenced," and he repeated :

"Though still on me it shines so sweet,
I scarce can call it mine."

"Yes, but you can," she exclaimed, blushing ; "all my smiles are for you and for no one else. Always call me *ma petite*; it sounds so caressing."

Déville made no answer, but only said, "The music has ceased, and the people are coming this way from the ball-room. We must not be seen here by ourselves, lest it occasion comment. Let us go out through the conservatory exit that leads to the ball-room. We must dance together the next polka, and not let people say we have been flirting all the evening in the conservatory."

"What care I what they say," she replied, "as long as I can be with you. There is not a woman here to-night who would not be happy to be in my place—and life is so short ! Remember I have to return to my collar and chain in a few hours."

Déville pressed her beautiful hand while she lingered over the fountains and statuary, and plucked rose-leaves from the bushes. Then she lingered over a lily, although she had passed twenty of them before, till finally the throng from the ball-room appeared close behind them, and Déville hurried her away so as not to be observed.

"You will come to the conservatory again before you leave the house, will you not ?" she said. "This has been the happiest hour of my existence ; and then you will repeat to me the rest of those beautiful verses ?"

"Yes," replied Déville ; "but let me first look after my friend. Let me carry him a message from you, and that will make him supremely happy."

Mrs. Eton assented, and seated herself in a far corner of the ball-room, where no one would be likely to find her and ask her to dance during Déville's absence.

Meanwhile, Déville wended his way to the billiard-room, expect-

ing to find Mr. Eton ; but the latter had gone up-stairs. He found him playing a rubber of whist with three other old gentlemen, and very intent upon his game. He had ostentatiously placed four ten-dollar gold pieces on the table as markers. Mr. Eton, even in the smallest matters, liked to display his money. .

At the conclusion of a hand, Deville approached Mr. Eton and said, "Mrs. Eton is worried about you, and is afraid you are not enjoying yourself. She declares she will go home if you are tired, although she is engaged for six dances, and is enjoying herself very much."

"The darling!" exclaimed Mr. Eton. "How thoughtful she always is of me! No, Deville, tell her I am as happy as I can be away from her ; but she can't dance and I play cards and yet be together. Do me the favor to look out for her comfort, and hand her in to supper when it is ready, for I may be in the middle of a game. You know, Deville, exactly what to do. There, that's a good fellow, oblige me."

"Certainly," said Deville. "But I shall come up and let you know when supper is ready, for I am sure Mrs. Eton would not enjoy it without you."

"No," said Eton, "the dear girl, I don't believe she would, she is so thoughtful of me ; but you try and make her contented, Deville. I will join you if I can, but I am playing ten dollars a corner." With that he led the ace of hearts, which he followed with king and queen, leaving the best of the suit in his hand, which was as good as a trump ; and Deville went away with his message.

Those three tricks made Mr. Eton very happy, for they secured him the game and twenty dollars. His heart expanded as his profits increased—as it did in commerce. When he netted fifty thousand on a cargo, he always gave his wife some handsome diamonds. He bought no other kind of jewelry, for it might depreciate in value.

"What a loving wife that is of mine!" said he, addressing his companions. "So thoughtful as she is of me! I don't believe she will enjoy herself this evening without me. She is always willing to give up her own pleasures for mine. Do you know, it was as much as I could do to persuade her to come to-night, she is so fond of home—I lead trumps, Mr. Thompson, to draw you out," and then he went on : "She makes my home so pleasant, and keeps the house full of nice young fellows that are devoted to her,

but she doesn't care a snap for any of them—I trump your ace, Mr. Phillips,” and the three other old fellows raised their eyes over their glasses with a peculiar look which each understood.

“You are a lucky dog, Eton,” said they. They had heard from their wives of Mrs. Eton's *penchant* for Deville, and were much amused with Eton's complacency, who played on, happy in his soul, and piled up the ten-dollar corner-bets, while Deville was whispering poetry in his wife's ear in the conservatory.

For appearance' sake she danced several times with others, but always found her way back to Deville, as if by accident, at the end of the quadrille.

During one of the dances, while Mrs. Eton was away from Deville, he noticed a couple enter the ball-room. He thought he had never seen a handsomer pair, and he envied the man who was with the beautiful girl. It was the daughter of the rich banker, Mr. Morton. We have already said that she was beautiful, but this expression hardly conveys an idea of her loveliness. She was just entering her nineteenth year, with the air and grace of a woman that had been at least two years in society. She was tall, with a lithe and willowy shape, and her beautiful arms were as round and white as if sculptured in marble. Her hands were small and perfect in shape, and her tiny foot, as it peeped from under her dress, was a marvel. Her eyes might have been taken for those beautiful black diamonds of which we have heard but never seen. Her dark hair fell in luxuriant curls behind her ear, while it was rolled up in a coil back of her Grecian head, making her look like one of the goddesses of Mount Olympus. Her face—but that can not be described! Its beauty would startle any one on first beholding it. Every feature was perfect, and in her cheek were dimples such as are sometimes seen in young and lovely children.

Yet withal there was an imperiousness in her air and a haughty look in her eye that were not altogether agreeable to encounter. The glance of her eye was at times like the lightning's flash, and made one start; but then it would melt into a soft, languid look that would win over the most obdurate heart.

There stood Louise Morton in her indescribable beauty, and one of the handsomest men in the room was about to lead her out in the dance.

This person did not look to be over nineteen years of age, although he was actually twenty-four. He was of medium height, finely formed, and of a light elastic figure. He had the hand-

somest blue eyes in the world, and the face of a beautiful girl. The women called him "the angel."

He was very animated in his conversation, exerting all his faculties to entertain his partner, while his soft blue eyes seemed to devour her with their looks of admiration.

Meanwhile, the young lady did not seem particularly interested in her partner's conversation, for her eyes wandered about the room, resting first on the beautiful Mrs. Eton, who, excited by the dancing, looked her prettiest. Then she looked at Deville, who was regarding her with undisguised admiration, and wondering who she could be.

When Miss Morton's eye caught that wondering look of Deville's, she started with a look of delight, as if she had longed to see him. But she had never laid eyes on him before to-night, and she wondered to herself who he could be, and whether there were many men in New York as handsome.

No matter in what part of the room she moved, she found herself looking at Deville; and every time she did so she found his piercing eyes fixed upon her. He seemed to be looking at some beautiful picture, whose eyes, by the skill of the artist, would follow one whithersoever he moved.

Devil had evidently forgotten all about Mrs. Eton, for whom he had been waiting while she danced, and Louise Morton had evidently forgotten all about her partner, from the attention she bestowed upon Deville—not with the determination of making overtures to him, but because she could not help it.

There was a fascination in the man that bound her as if by a spell, and the same electric current that affected one seemed to affect the other, so that they continued to look into each other's eyes until George May, her partner, noticed it, and remarked, "That man seems to annoy you with his staring, and, if he continues it, I shall feel called upon to ask him what he means."

"Sir," said the lady, haughtily, "what man are you speaking of? If you refer to the handsome gentleman looking this way, he seems to be one that would know how to resent an interference. Probably he is only admiring your handsome face, and you could not object to that."

"But it is not polite to stare at any one as he does at you."

"As long as I don't object to it," she replied, "I don't see why you should take exception. Besides, my father is near by, and if I desire any assistance I can call on him." This was said in the

most chilling manner, and Mr. May could, of course, say no more. He put on rather a subdued air, but, like his partner, kept his eyes upon what he considered the impertinent stranger.

This electrical interchange of glances between Louise Morton and Deville continued while the dance lasted. But presently Mrs. Eton stopped in front of Deville, and held out her hand, saying, "Come, take a turn with me." This request, of course, he could not decline. But, turn where Deville would, he could not keep his eyes off Miss Morton, and, look at her when he would, he found those diamond-like eyes fixed upon him.

When Deville led his partner to her seat, she said, "Oh, I am so glad to get back to you. It was such a bore to dance with that man; and I tried all the time to catch your eye, but you seemed to be looking at something afar off. Your lips were half open, as if lost in admiration of some beautiful object."

"Yes?" he said, and that was all that passed between them. He was not in a complimentary mood, and, notwithstanding all the fascinating attentions she paid him, the efforts she made to lead him into conversation failed to do so. His eyes wandered round the room in search of the sweet vision that had entranced him. But Miss Morton had finished her dance, and had taken her father's arm to join her mother in the reception-room.

The doors of the grand supper-room now flew open, the music struck up a march, and the guests thronged in to the table, which was spread with all the delicacies of the season.

The pyramids of flowers on the table and the beds of roses on the mantels and window-sills were so numerous and so gorgeous, that one felt as if he were sailing in a sea of flowers. The throng was perhaps rather too dense for comfort; but that is always expected at a fashionable entertainment, and people wouldn't enjoy it if it were otherwise.

Devilé handed in Mrs. Eton according to promise; but his spirits had evaporated, and, when the lady bantered him on his want of agreeability, he pleaded a severe headache. In handing Mrs. Eton an ice-cream, he started so suddenly that the saucer nearly dropped from his hand. He found himself face to face with Louise Morton, who was hanging on her father's arm.

Devilé's emotion was so great that Mrs. Eton's attention was drawn to it, and she said, "You must have seen a ghost, and a very pretty one too if it's Miss Morton you are looking at. But, Devilé, she isn't as pretty as I am; so you needn't look as if you

wanted to eat her up. Please get me some champagne, and take some yourself. Perhaps it will brighten up your ideas."

Devil paid no attention to these remarks, but helped Mrs. Eton mechanically to champagne, and filled a large glass for himself. "Toss glasses with me," she said, "and I will give you a toast," which he did without a smile, and she repeated the lines he had quoted to her that evening—

" 'Oh, when amidst the gay I meet
That beaming smile of thine! ' "

"You don't say that to me any more," she said, "and you look as if you would like to say it to some one else. Oh, fickle man!" and she pulled in vexation a flower from one of the vases on the supper-table.

Devil turned to see if Miss Morton was still in the room, and saw her looking intently at him. He could not help returning her gaze with the same ardor, when, what was his surprise, to see her draw herself up haughtily and, looking indignantly upon him, turn her head in another direction.

This cut him to the heart, and all the life seemed taken out of him for the rest of the evening. Do what he would, he never found Miss Morton looking at him again, and shortly afterward the Morton family left for their home.

Pretty Mrs. Eton tried in vain to rouse up Devil; but, as he would not respond to her flattering sallies, she requested him to call her husband, as she wanted to go home, and she said, poutingly, "I suppose, Mr. Devil, you will put my cloak on for me and put me in the carriage?"

"Of course," answered Devil; "it will give me great pleasure, if Mr. Eton does not object."

"Mr. Eton object!" she said, with a smile; "he might object, though, to your kissing his wife on the forehead."

Devil started as if he had been stung by a nettle, and went in search of Mr. Eton, whom he found still at the card-table, with a bottle of wine at his elbow and a large pile of gold pieces at his right hand.

However, he gave up the game when Devil came for him, saying to his friends, "I never keep my darling waiting; she is always so thoughtful of me." As soon as Mr. Eton was out of hearing his cronies laughed aloud, though nothing was said, and, gathering

up their money, they departed. It is the covert sneer that injures a reputation more than outspoken words.

Mr. Eton met his wife at the dressing-room door, where Deville was assisting her to put on her cloak.

He was more than ordinarily attentive, as if to atone for his recent neglect, and pressed her hand warmly when he found an opportunity to do so. Then, turning to Mr. Eton, he said, "Mrs. Eton is waiting for you to escort her to the carriage, unless you will permit me to have that honor."

"Certainly, my boy," said Mr. Eton, "you are entitled to that after having had charge of her all the evening and allowing me to win three hundred dollars." So Deville handed the lady to her carriage and gave her hand the last warm pressure, which made her supremely happy. "Poor boy!" said she to her husband, "he has had such a dreadful headache all the evening that he has scarcely spoken a word."

"Yes," said Mr. Eton, "I expect Vandeußen's gas-lights had something to do with it;—but, Fanny, I intend to beat that. No man shall have a better lighted house than mine. Send round in the morning, darling, and ask Mr. Deville to dine with us at six, and invite two or three nice young fellows to meet him. I like Deville; he is a trump, and will make his way in the world."

CHAPTER VII.

THE DIAMOND-ROBBERY.

THAT night, when pretty Mrs. Eton, after kissing her husband affectionately, tripped up-stairs to her boudoir, the old gentleman drew his easy-chair in front of a blazing wood fire and lighted a fine cigar—a pleasure he had been looking forward to for some time. It was not the custom in those days to smoke at a house where an entertainment was given.

Mr. Eton was rejoicing in his heart that his wife was the most beautiful woman in Vandeußen's ball-room, and that she wore the most expensive diamonds in New York.

"How angry Morton must have felt," he said to himself, "when he saw those beautiful stones on my wife's neck—and he is

such a judge of diamonds! Then those four stones in her hair! There are none like them in New York. Why, I paid Bullion & Co. eight thousand dollars for them, and they could not be duplicated now for ten thousand." Just at this moment his soliloquy was interrupted by a piercing shriek from Mrs. Eton's boudoir, and a moment after her French maid appeared at the top of the stairs uttering Gallic expletives faster than any short-hand writer could take them down.

Mr. Eton's first thought was that a mouse had got into the room; then it occurred to him that the curtains had taken fire, and he started for the door to give the alarm. But the cries of the maid, "*Ah, ma pauvre, madame!*" checked his course, and, seizing the poker, he rushed up-stairs, having no doubt that a burglar was in the house. He found his wife lying in a fainting-fit on the sofa.

The servants were soon aroused, and one of them sent post-haste for a doctor. Meanwhile, Mr. Eton, discovering that his wife was breathing, sent the maid for the cologne. "Hurry, hang it!" he cried. "I never knew a Frenchwoman to be of any use in time of trouble."

But while all this was going on, Mrs. Eton suddenly sat bolt upright on the sofa, and, opening her eyes, screamed, "Oh, my diamonds, my diamonds! they are gone, lost forever, trampled to pieces in that crowd; oh, my diamonds! And Mrs. Morton will still have her twenty-five-thousand-dollar set! Oh, Eton, pity your poor wife!"

"What," cried Mr. Eton, springing to his feet, "your diamonds lost?"—and forgetting his endearing manner of addressing his wife—"how the devil did you lose them? Do you think I can buy fifty thousand dollars' worth of diamonds every day? Here, James, tell the coachman to harness up the horses. You must have dropped them at Vandensen's! I knew how it would be when I let you wear them. I bought them on speculation—the best bargain I have made this year; and now to lose them as if they were so many brass buttons!" He walked up and down the room in a towering rage, swearing at the French maid for not fastening the diamonds better on her mistress's neck, and wishing everything to the devil generally.

"But, my darling," cried Mrs. Eton, in piteous tones, "all my diamonds are gone—those I wore around my neck and those I wore in my hair."

"What," exclaimed Mr. Eton, "eight thousand more? Have your ear-rings gone too, madam?" he said, sarcastically.

She put her hands to her pretty ears, and screamed that they too were gone.

"Fifty-eight thousand dollars gone to the devil!" roared Eton. "You have been robbed. But I will go at once to Vandeußen's and solve this mystery," and, hurrying to the street, he jumped into his carriage, ordering the coachman to drive as fast as possible to the "d—d gas-man's."

When Mr. Eton arrived at Vandeußen's he found that establishment in a great state of excitement. The rich banker, Mr. Morton, had just arrived to see if his wife had let her diamonds fall upon the ball-room floor. Mr. Livingston had come to ask the same question, his wife having lost her whole set, excepting her ear-rings. Mrs. Jones was bereft of two diamond bracelets, and Mr. Jones of his diamond-set watch. Mr. Phillips had had his pocket picked of ten thousand dollars in bank-notes, which he had put in his pocket for safe-keeping rather than leave the money at home; and Mrs. Vandeußen was minus her second-best set of diamonds, worth ten thousand dollars.

"Hang it!" said Mr. Eton, "all the burglars in New York must have been at the ball, and the d—d gas-lights helped 'em to carry out their designs. But, thank heaven, I'm no worse off than others, and the world can't laugh at me. I am glad my darling is not to blame after all. I might have known she wasn't careless, she is always so thoughtful."

After getting a full account of all the robberies, that he might retail it to his wife, Mr. Eton drove home.

He found Mrs. Eton still weeping. "Cheer up, my pet," he exclaimed; "we are not the only victims. The Mortons, the Livingstons, the Phillipses, and even the Vandeußens have been robbed, and in the most expert manner I ever heard of. My own opinion is that the diamonds were melted up by the heat of Vandeußen's gas-lights, for I never was in a hotter place in my life. But, Fanny, my darling, you shall have another set of diamonds more beautiful than the others. I'll let 'em see that old Eton isn't the boy to squirm over a set of fifty-thousand-dollar diamonds. I'll send to Paris for the handsomest set to be found there. I wonder if old Morton can do better than that."

Mrs. Eton dried her tears and threw her arms around her husband's neck. She called him her dear old darling, and said she

loved him more and more every day of her life—which made the old gentleman so happy that he sat down forthwith and wrote to his agent in Paris, directing him to procure at once a set of first-quality paste diamonds in imitation of a sixty-thousand-dollar set like the last sent him, and authorizing him to draw on the house of Eton & Co. for fifteen hundred dollars, but making the bill out for sixty thousand, as usual in such cases.

After performing this act of liberality Mr. Eton smiled lovingly and lighted his cigar.

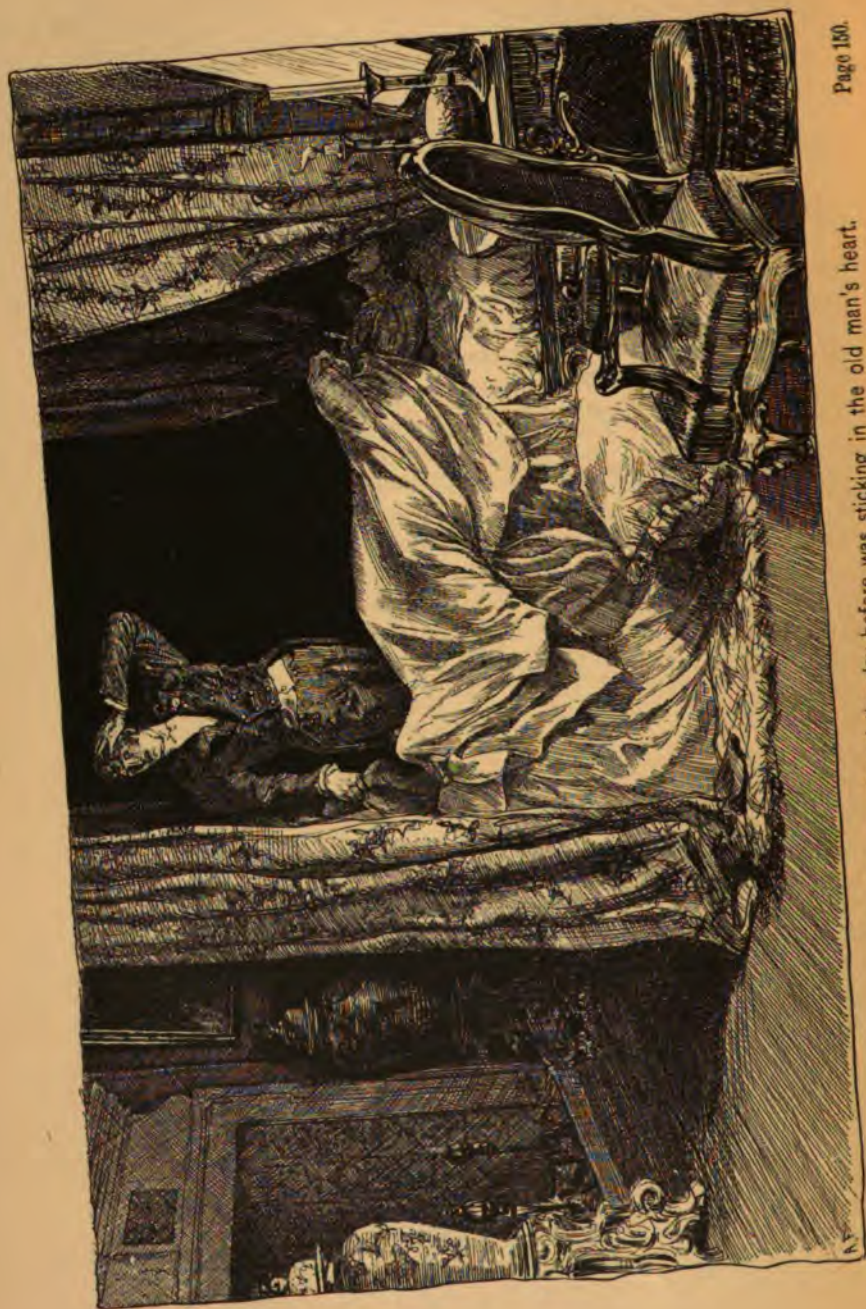
“This,” he mused, “will increase my credit with the public, and when the papers announce, as I shall take care they’ll do, that I have purchased a sixty-thousand-dollar set of diamonds for my wife, my credit will go higher than ever.” After smoking his cigar, this good man went to bed at three o’clock in the morning, and slept the sleep of the virtuous.

Next day the papers had what in those days was considered a very full report of the Vandeusen ball, including an account of the wonderful gas-lights, and supplemented by a statement of the daring robbery of diamonds actually taken from the persons of the guests. Such a thing had never been heard of before in the history of thieving. Some thought it was the work of waiters from the Hôtel d’Or, whose proprietor, Monsieur Jacques Volavol, had the contract for furnishing the good things consumed at the supper, with the exception of the wines, which were imported especially for the occasion.

Mr. Smith, the sexton of St. Vitus’s Church, who was indispensable on all great occasions of this kind, had stood at the door while the company was entering, to see that no one entered that had not received an invitation. There were, however, some people mean enough to say that an invitation could be procured through Smith to any party for a liberal *douceur*, and the robbers may have gotten in in this way; but Smith came out with a disclaimer in the “Post” three columns long, but which contained nothing to throw any light on the subject.

The reason for suspecting the waiters from the Hôtel d’Or was that some twenty massive gold salt-cellars and a quantity of silver-ware had disappeared. It was thought that such an inroad upon the plate could only have been made by the servants; but Monsieur Volavol made oath before a magistrate that he was well acquainted with every *garçon* in his employ, and was sure they all could be trusted with millions without appropriating a cent.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE ROBBERY—MR. ETON'S DINNER-PARTY.

AFTER many days' search by the police, not a particle of information in regard to the diamond-robbery could be obtained. The thieves evidently understood their business, and had done their work well. A regular system of surveillance was now established to see what the future would bring forth.

A good many jokes were cracked at Mr. Vandeußen's expense. Some said it served the rich people right, who invested so much money in diamonds merely to imitate the aristocracy of Europe while there were so many half-starved wretches at their doors.

But the interest in the matter gradually died out, and the election of a mayor coming off about that time, everything else was forgotten in the excitement of that momentous event, on the issue of which every New Yorker seemed to have staked his happiness.

As for the principal sufferers—they seemed to take little trouble to recover their property in the way of offering rewards, although they put the cases into the hands of the chief of police. Mr. Eton seemed rather pleased at the loss of his property, and when any one said anything to him on the subject he would remark that sixty thousand dollars would be a heavy loss to some people, but the house of Eton & Co. could stand it; and then would add that "an order has gone to Paris for another set of diamonds for my wife. She shan't be disappointed, she is always so very thoughtful of me."

The chief of police had hardly reached home after the party when news was brought to him of the robbery. In spite of his imperturbability, he stood aghast at the news; but, seizing his hat, he rushed into the street, and, calling one of the rickety old hacks known as "night-hawks," he drove with all speed to Mr. Vandeußen's house.

He could learn nothing there beyond what we have related, and he took his leave with an assurance to Mr. Vandeußen that the police would be on the robber's track before daylight. But, alas! he had said the same thing often before. The police had found so little after all their searchings that he had little real hope of their finding out anything in this case.

Returning to the carriage, the chief took from his pocket-book a card on which was written Allan Dare's address, No. 229 Ann

Street. He ordered the driver to wait for him at a point not far distant. The chief knew the house very well, as he did most others in New York, and Allan had given him all the necessary instructions about entering it.

On arriving at the house he felt for the knocker of the door, underneath which was a little knob. He pressed the knob, and a sound was heard like the striking of a clock. Presently the door was opened by Allan Dare himself.

It was now past four o'clock in the morning, and the murmuring sound of the city waking from its slumbers came faintly upon the air. Soon the roar of wheels, like the sound of Niagara, would be heard in all quarters.

Allan Dare showed the chief into a small parlor, where an elderly woman and her daughter were sitting near a small table lighted by a couple of candles; but he did not seem to think it necessary to bring them to the notice of the chief.

"I wish to see you in private," said the chief. "I have some news that will startle you."

"I suppose," said Allan, "you come to tell me of the Vandeu-
sen robbery, but I heard of that an hour ago."

The chief started. "How can that be," he said, "when I have just come from there, and you left the house with me at half-past one o'clock?"

"That's easily explained," said Allan. "This young woman was installed in the house early in the evening. I saw Mr. Vandeu-
sen before dark, and told him it was your wish that she should be there—that it would be necessary to have some one in the dressing-rooms to keep a lookout over matters generally and see that no improper persons were present. This young woman is named Gabrielle, and she is my cleverest detective."

"A female detective!" exclaimed the chief. "I never heard of such a thing."

"That's part of the Le Coque system," said Allan Dare. "We employ all kinds of tools, and often use women. They are more honest than men, and a great deal shrewder. Now, sir, I'll show you how much has been done since Mrs. Ruggles was robbed. After dining with you on that day, I called on the landlady and took her into my confidence, which flattered her greatly. I told her that the reputation of her house was at stake, and if she would follow my advice it would never be known that a robbery had taken place there; that it was necessary for me to place a female detec-

tive in the house to shadow Jane Ross, the chambermaid, who evidently took great interest in her boarder, Mr. Cole, and would no doubt inform that person that his room had been examined. I told her she must let it be understood that the woman was a new servant.

"So Gabrielle was put on watch at once. Jane Ross was delighted at getting somebody to assist her, and immediately turned over to Gabrielle the rooms of the two maiden ladies, and told her she must carry water to Mrs. Ruggles's room.

"Finding that Jane was getting ready to go out, Gabrielle prepared to follow her. I had already explained matters to the post-master, and he gave orders for one of his clerks to be on the watch for the girl Ross when she came to post letters. When Jane went out, Gabrielle, assuming a disguise she had handy, followed her to the post-office. Gabrielle stole in the back way, and, having secured the letter which Jane dropped in the box, as was arranged with the post-master, reached home by a short cut before Jane got there. Here is the letter, and we are as wise after reading it as we were before, but it shows that the girl Ross and Cole are in collusion."

"This is tampering with the mails," said the chief of police, gravely, "and is a penal offense—"

"In which the post-master is a party," laughed Allan. "Why, my dear sir, if it were allowed to use the mail for every illicit purpose there would be no security to the public—the mischief would be irreparable. In France this is a common method of detecting knaves. Besides, I have removed the seal so carefully and sealed it up again that no one in the world can find it out. The letter will be returned to the post-office, and when the owner calls for it he will be followed to his retreat."

"Well," said the chief, "you do beat all I ever heard of. But let me see a copy of the letter."

Allan handed him the letter; but he could make nothing of it. It was all Greek to him.

"Can *you* read it?" said the chief.

"No," said Allan, "but I hope soon to do so. I can generally manage to read letters of this kind, but this is a little more troublesome than usual. It is ingenious without doubt, and the girl is a smart one."

The letter was as follows :

"251. 11. 19 — × soasele gouple + licutle leander sorunte ×

— tojouren bunco-shadowed — lepaten eltheno 720 × × leonter
dikerply 1000 — totilliy royonge deheade popomen 200—”

“What do you think of it?” said Allan Dare.

“I don’t think at all,” said the chief; “it’s beyond my comprehension.”

“Well,” said the detective, “it proves to me that there is an intelligent set of men, holding a position in society, that are concerned in the villainies that have puzzled you so much of late—and I will prove it. When Gabrielle was at Mr. Vandusen’s she noticed a tall, dark-complexioned man come up-stairs into the gentlemen’s room, which was Mr. Vandusen’s bedroom. He seemed to be moving about with an object, brushing his hair and looking at the pictures, until finally he said, ‘My girl, I feel quite ill. Won’t you get me a little brandy?’ She answered, ‘You’ll find plenty down-stairs, sir.’ ‘Oh,’ said he, ‘it’s so infernal hot down there that I had to leave for fear of fainting.’ Gabrielle put on an innocent expression, and the gentleman began to pay her compliments, with which she pretended to be much pleased. Finally he gave her five dollars to go for the brandy. She went a few steps, but returning in a moment found the man, with the girl who was in the ladies’ dressing-room, looking into a drawer. They must have had a pass-key, for Gabrielle had examined all the drawers on first going up-stairs and found them secure. As soon as they heard Gabrielle returning, the drawer was closed by the girl, who pushed her back against it; but, unluckily for her, her apron-tie got caught, and she had to tear it out in getting away. As the man and the girl moved out of the room, Gabrielle heard the girl say, ‘Don’t mind her; she’s a half-idiot.’ Gabrielle secured the apron-tie as evidence, and here it is.

“During the evening I was up and down stairs half a dozen times looking about, and on one of these occasions Gabrielle whispered to me, ‘The rogues are here,’ and pointed out the man I have just mentioned. As the party was breaking up, I saw him standing by the ladies’ dressing-room door waiting to escort Miss Morton to her carriage. I heard her call him ‘Mr. Cole!’”

“Thunder and lightning!” exclaimed the chief, “after this I’ll have a corps of detectives made up entirely of women.”

“Well, you see,” said Allan Dare, “I am on the track of the fox, but it may be a month yet before I run him to cover.”

“A month is a long time in the present excited state of the public mind,” said the chief.

"Yes," said Allan, "but remember that for the past year you have got nothing, and here are palpable facts in your possession. To-morrow I shall find out all about that girl at Vandeußen's, and, as nothing more can be done to-night, I think you had better go home and take some rest. I am now going to escort these good people home."

So the chief departed and rejoined his anxious wife and daughter, who were wondering what had become of him.

When Allan Dare returned to his domicile he threw himself on a sofa, and was soon in a sound sleep, undisturbed by worldly cares.

On the day after the ball there was a dinner at Mr. Eton's at five o'clock, to which were invited Robert Deville, George May, Edwin Livingston, and Alphonse Robinet—all young society men, making, with the host and hostess, six in all.

Mr. May had never been introduced to Deville, but was well acquainted with the others. Deville was rather taken by surprise at the manner in which Mr. May met the introduction, giving him a formal bow and not appearing to notice his proffered hand. May's manner, if not insulting, was anything but cordial.

Devilie remembered that he had seen May the night before standing with Miss Morton; but at the moment he was so taken up with the beautiful girl that her escort had gone out of his mind altogether. May recalled Deville as the man whom he was so anxious to call to an account the night before. Now that he could closely scan Deville's herculean form, he thought to himself that it would be a hazardous undertaking to meddle with him unless provided with a pistol.

Devilie received his repulse with cool *hauteur*, and took a seat beside Mrs. Eton on the sofa.

Mr. Eton had just finished reading the evening paper. "We have good news," he said; "the police are on the track of the robbers." And then he read an interesting account of how English Charley, the policeman, had certain proof that the robbery was the work of a gang that had just come over from London, after operating in like manner in that metropolis.

"I'll bet five hundred dollars that those robbers will never be found, and that you never will hear of your diamonds again," said Deville to Mrs. Eton.

"I don't care much if I don't hear of them again," said Mrs. Eton. "My husband has promised me a new set, and I shall be in

a flutter until they come. Only think, they are to come over in the *Elmira*, and she won't be here for forty-five long days. Mr. Eton says he doesn't care about the loss at all; that it was a thing that might happen to any one."

"Yes," said Mr. Eton, "of course it might. Didn't it happen to Mrs. Morton? I wonder how old Morton stood it, and whether he sent to Paris for another set?"

"Mr. Eton says," chimed in Mrs. Eton, "that the house of Eton & Co. can stand the loss and not feel it."

"Yes," interposed Eton, "twice as much as that"—which made the company stare.

"Darling," said Mrs. Eton, "may I tell them what my next set is to cost?"

"Yes," said her husband, "but they must not mention it"—knowing full well the news would soon be all over town.

"The new set," said Mrs. Eton, "will cost sixty thousand dollars!"

"And," said Mr. Eton, "if old Morton or even Vandensen can do better than that, why I will do better still."

"I don't know what Mr. Vandensen can do, sir," said May, "but I know that Mr. Morton can afford to spend half a million dollars in diamonds if it suits him—that is, if his wife would let him invest his money in that way."

"Humph!" said Eton, "wives are very convenient things when a man doesn't want to spend his money. Now, my wife never interferes in such matters."

"No, my dear," said Mrs. Eton, "I never do. You might spend a hundred thousand on diamonds for me, and I should not object."

"Pray, Mr. May," said Eton, "as you seem to know so much of Mr. Morton's affairs, how much is he worth?"

"To my knowledge," said May, "he is worth over a million in stocks, and he owns blocks of houses down town."

"Ah!" said Eton, "good investments; but give me ships, and let me be my own insurer. Why, sir, if we went to war with England to-morrow, I have ships enough on the ocean that, properly manned and equipped, would sweep the commerce of Great Britain from the seas."

"But," said Deville, "she would gobble up all your vessels with their cargoes before they could get into port."

"Humph!" said Eton, "I didn't think of that."

Dinner was now announced, and Deville handed Mrs. Eton to the table and sat at her left—"next my heart," she whispered to him, "for that is your place." The dinner passed off as all such entertainments do when people are all determined to be agreeable. May seemed a little unsociable at first, remembering how Deville had looked at Miss Morton the night before; but noticing the tender smiles Mrs. Eton served out to him with the dessert, and in what low tones they talked together, he concluded that they must be desperately in love with each other, and that it was by accident that Deville had stared so hard at Miss Morton the night of the ball.

When the conversation was general, Deville took such a prominent part in it and expressed himself so elegantly, that May could not help being attracted by him, and finally desired to know him better.

When the dinner was over, and Mr. Eton excused himself in order to fulfill an engagement, Mrs. Eton ordered coffee and maraschino in her pretty little reception-room, where the party gave themselves up to enjoyment. Under the fascinating smiles of the hostess the hours flew like minutes.

George May had now become fascinated with Deville, and evinced not the least jealousy because Mrs. Eton showered all her favors upon him. He was welcome to them all so long as he didn't look too intently at Miss Morton. In the course of conversation he asked Deville if he had noticed her at the ball, and to his surprise was told that he had not, as he was very near-sighted and could hardly tell one woman from another at a little distance.

"What a fool I am," muttered May to himself, "making myself jealous for nothing! This man is too much of a gentleman to behave rudely;" and he told Deville he should take great pleasure in introducing him to the Mortons, who he said were most agreeable people.

This unexpected good fortune made Deville happy for the night, so that he could afford to throw away a good many smiles and soft sayings on Mrs. Eton.

That night Deville could not sleep, so happy was he at the idea of seeing the beautiful girl that had entranced his senses, while the previous night he could not sleep because he feared he might never have an opportunity of making her acquaintance—for Mr. Morton was considered aristocratic in his notions, and very careful whom he invited to his house. In business transactions Deville had

always found him very formal, and had never given him a hint that he should be glad to see him at his domicile.

When Deville finally managed to sleep, his dreams were tinged with the brightest hues. The mingled roses and lilies of Miss Morton's complexion were ever before him. All night long he was gazing on those blissful lips, which looked so rich in the kisses they seemed to invite. That lovely neck, with its heavenly supports, seemed the realization of all that was beautiful in the sculptor's art, while, in the dimpled chin, cupids seemed to nestle, ready to shoot their arrows at any unwary intruder on those virgin charms. Her form—faintly shadowed, yet not concealed—floated ever before him, and in his imagination her coal-black hair was brushing against his burning temples.

He awoke tired and feverish, notwithstanding his dreams had been so agreeable, and he awoke to confess to himself that he was deeply in love with this raven-haired girl, who, for aught he knew, might be affianced to the handsome George May, a man that seemed to possess all the qualities that appeal most strongly to a woman's heart.

"'Faint heart ne'er won fair lady,'" said Deville to himself, "and I will risk all I have on the hazard of the die." Thus meditating, he dressed himself with his usual care, and went to his office.

The first thing that attracted his notice as he passed through the streets was a placard announcing that the Manhattan Gas Company had been formed, with two hundred subscribers to the stock; capital, one million dollars. Mr. Vandeußen, president; Mr. Morton, vice-president; Mr. Eton and nineteen other prominent citizens, directors.

Devilé found his own name included, which he thought strange, considering that he had never been asked for the use of it; but he accepted the situation as a compliment and decided to subscribe. No doubt a good many other people found themselves directors or stockholders in the Manhattan Gas Company without any action of their own in the matter, for this is a common way of inaugurating enterprises in this country, which sometimes turn out well, but oftener do not.

A charter had been procured in Albany not long before, and, as soon as the stock was subscribed for, the company was supposed to be on the flood-tide to fortune. The streets of New York would no longer be obscured by darkness so as to be unsafe

for the citizens at night and disgraceful to the leading city of America.

For the present we will leave all those engaged in this laudable enterprise. Mr. and Mrs. Vandeußen and their pretty daughter were happy beyond expression, and Mr. Vandeußen determined to give his wife another set of black pearls as soon as the gas-company should declare their first dividend.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RED-WAFER MAN.

It was a dull, misty day in April, and great drops of moisture stood on the overcoats of the wayfarers. It was yet early, but the hum of the city began to be heard from every quarter, and the lazy smoke from the forges and manufactories, forcing its way aloft through the thick atmosphere, made all surrounding objects as somber as the most gloomy ascetic could desire.

The mechanics were just beginning to move toward their places of labor, with their tools and tin-kettles in hand, and the East River ferry-boats were busy landing their human freight.

Just before the Jackson Street ferry-boat touched the city pier, a man of sturdy mien was seen approaching it.

Occasionally he would pause for a moment at a post or at the corner of some old building, and when he moved on there could be seen a red wafer sticking where he had halted, which was not there before.

A close observer might have noticed several of the passengers coming from the ferry-boat carefully examining these wafers, nodding their heads, and passing on.

After leaving the ferry, the stranger passed up Jackson Street to Grand Street, and thence went on till he stopped at the corner of Grand Street and East Broadway, where he leaned for a moment against a wooden railing on the steps of a house. When he moved on, the red wafer that he had affixed to the railing could be discerned at a distance of a hundred yards.

Again the mysterious stranger plodded on, and, turning into Ludlow Street, fastened a wafer to a house in the middle of the first square. Then, passing through Ludlow Street and crossing

East Broadway, he stopped with his back against a white paling, and left his red mark on the fence as before. Then he strode down Pike Street and up Madison Street, and, walking up the steps of a house, knocked at the door. To the girl who answered his summons he gave a blank envelope containing a red wafer, directing it to be given to the master of the house. The stranger now walked to the Bowery, where at intervals the red wafer was fastened to some conspicuous part of a house, without anybody being the wiser as to how it was done. Sometimes the man would stoop as if to adjust his shoe, and, when he rose, the red wafer was left to mark his advent. It was clear that he took great care that no one should see him affix the wafers. On he trudged till he came to the corner of Broadway and Leonard Street, where there was a restaurant. He leaned for a moment against the entrance and then went on, with the inevitable wafer sticking to the lintel of the door, where any one would suppose that some child had stuck it in sport.

The person that seemed engaged in this puerile amusement now passed into the restaurant, and, taking a seat in a dark corner, ordered a substantial breakfast—a beefsteak with mushrooms, hot rolls, potatoes, and a bottle of wine.

After disposing of the steak, he ordered woodcock on toast, and thus managed to appease his appetite—which was very good, as he had had nothing to eat that day, and it was now nearly noon.

The man with a good appetite lingered long over his meal, which he seemed to enjoy after his arduous labors. The waiter stared to see one man devouring such a quantity of food and drink, for the establishment did not often have so liberal a customer. He would not have been surprised had the stranger ordered a round of beef and another bottle of wine.

The waiter saw that the stranger was a gentleman in spite of his rough dress, for waiters are generally keen-witted fellows. He noticed that the man always used his napkin, and carved his woodcock as daintily as if he were doing it for a lady. The waiter hoped he would leave him one of the birds after demolishing so much steak—for our waiter was of aristocratic taste, and seldom got a chance at the long-billed luxuries. But the stranger consumed the birds entire, and did not even leave the waiter a drop of wine.

The waiter's grief, however, was somewhat assuaged when the stranger finally handed him a ten-dollar bill, and presented him, ere he passed into the street, with one dollar in change for himself.

"I knew he was nobby," said the waiter, gazing affectionately at the coin; "only nobs do that. Even the merchants don't give a feller over a shilling."

The stranger now took up his line of march again along Broadway into Cortlandt Street, where he stuck two wafers; then down to Church Street, along to Washington Street to the Battery, where he stuck several wafers. He went on to the Bowling Green, and there proceeded with particular care, attaching wafers on the iron railing only in front of certain houses, most of them houses of note. By this time he had expended a large stock of wafers.

Still, his errand did not seem to be half finished. He carefully examined all the houses along the Battery, which at that time were occupied by people of fashion—who would have laughed had they been told that in forty years not a fashionable residence would be found below Washington Square, and that the beautiful Battery would become a landing-place for emigrants.

After sticking red wafers on many houses, the stranger passed through Bridge Street into Whitehall Street and went through the same performance there, after which he went along Front Street to Wall Street, then into William Street until he reached Maiden Lane, forever sticking his wafers, although nobody ever saw him in the act. In this manner he kept on all through that damp, dismal day. From seven in the morning until five in the afternoon had he traveled without sign of fatigue; at the latter hour he was still employed in sticking wafers, and had arrived in the vicinity of the City Hall.

Then he crossed over to Chambers Street, and, placing a wafer on the door of the police-office, drew a long breath and ejaculated, "Thank heaven, that job's done!"

The man then went around to the corner of Reade Street and Broadway, and, entering a restaurant, ordered a private room, and partook of a supper which in quality and quantity differed little from his former meal. Then he lay down on a sofa, and, ordering the waiter to call him at ten o'clock, sank into a profound slumber.

At ten o'clock at night, in the days of which we have been writing, the streets of New York wore a very quiet appearance. There were no long lines of illuminated shop-windows, and it was only in front of the places of amusement that some slight effort was made to dispel the gloom of night.

The City Hall and Park were as gloomy as they well could be,

and all of the streets to the northward were anything but inviting. Within ten minutes' walk of the office of the chief of police stood the Five Points—as dreadful an abode of misery, vice, and crime as ever existed. Wayfarers were careful how they moved about these places alone and at night.

Not so the wafer-man when at ten o'clock he was roused from his slumbers. He lighted a cigar, and sallied forth into the night, passing the City Hall and crossing the Park diagonally in the direction of Frankfort Street.

A cold, drizzly rain chilled the stranger to the bone, and he frequently stumbled over the seats placed under the wide-spreading trees for the accommodation of visitors.

There was no play that night in the Park Theatre, which was closed for repairs; consequently its large lamps were not lighted, and the surroundings were dark and dismal. The lamp at the southeast corner of the Park was extinguished, doubtless by the wind, so that all was in obscurity.

The wafer-sticker puffed his cigar to enable him to ascertain by its light when he had reached the gate, when suddenly there appeared before him a large man pointing a pistol at his head.

"Your money or your life!" said the robber, "and don't you open your lips."

Our traveler was not in the least dismayed, but quickly thrusting the pistol aside with one hand, he planted a blow with the other right between the robber's eyes, who fell to the ground as if struck by a sledge-hammer.

"I am afraid I've killed him!" exclaimed the wafer-man. "I ought not to have hit so hard. Perhaps the poor devil has a family starving at home for want of bread. If he had only known it, I would have assisted him for the asking." He stooped and raised the prostrate robber to a sitting position; but the man fell helpless when his hold was relaxed. No assistance was at hand. The rain had driven the guardians of the night to their boozing dens; so the wafer-man waited to see if his victim would come to. At length the prostrate individual began to saw the air with his hands and moan piteously.

"Thank God!" said the other, "he is not dead." And he waited patiently for further developments, lighting another cigar to cheer the solitude.

Presently he heard the sound of wheels and saw the lamps of a carriage, and knew by experience that it was one of the city "night-

hawks" looking for a fare. He called the driver, and, finding that he was not engaged, told him to bring one of his lamps to look at a friend who had fallen and hurt himself.

The hackman left his sorry beasts to take care of themselves, and the two sought the spot where the robber had fallen. They found him sitting up sawing the air with one hand and with the other trying to loosen his cravat, while his eyes were almost starting from his head.

On loosening his cravat, the robber breathed freely, but soon fell back on the ground again.

"Let us see where he lives," said our wafer-sticker; "perhaps he has a card in his pocket. Hold your light," and he began to search the robber's pockets.

"I thought you knowed him," said the driver, suspiciously. "You said as how he was a friend of yourn."

"And so I do know him," said the other; "but you don't suppose I know where every man of my acquaintance lives, do you? You mind what I tell you, and don't ask any questions." The driver, after looking at the stranger's powerful frame, concluded that it would be well to do as he told him.

Suddenly the coachman, in moving about, picked up a silver-mounted pistol, exclaiming, "A jewel-pistol, or I'm a ninky."

"That's mine," said our street-traveler. "It dropped out of my side-pocket; give it to me." Seizing it, he thrust it into his breast-pocket.

Then the coachee, holding his light in search of some name or number, suddenly let the reflection fall on the man's face. "Mother of Moses!" he exclaimed, "if he ain't been kicked atween the eyes by a hoss with four shoes on one foot, and his nose is as big as a six-pound sweet-potater."

"Yes," said the other, "he got into a little row this evening, and had the worst of it. I was trying to get him home. But here's his address," taking a card from the man's pocket-book. "I ought to have remembered the number if I'd thought for a moment."

"Yes," said coachee, "I often forget the number of my own coach," and he eyed the stranger again suspiciously.

"Now, don't be too facetious, driver," said the other, "and mind what I say to you, or you may have your number taken from you." Here, as if by accident, he displayed a silver badge, a circumstance that made the coachee very mum.

"Now, driver, help me lift my friend into your carriage." And they both took hold of the man to raise him.

"He's a stunner," said the driver; "weighs two hundred and sixty pounds at least."

"More than that," said the other; "two hundred and sixty-eight, to my knowledge."

With some difficulty they got the robber to his feet and started toward the carriage. He was very shaky on his legs, and his head wobbled about like that of a Chinese mandarin. But when they got close to the carriage he made a dart at the open door, and mumbled out, "Drive home."

"He jumps into a carriage like an eel into a eel-pot," said the coachee. "'Tain't the fust time by a long shot he's rid in a 'night-hawk.'"

"Drive as fast as you can to 360 William Street," said our acquaintance, "if those old rats of yours can get out of a walk, and half a dollar extra if you make good time." The half dollar extra had the desired effect, and the ancient chariot rattled so rapidly over the rough cobble-stones that it almost put out the lights.

The robber now began to talk incoherently. "Don't take me to jail. I couldn't see Flossy starve before my eyes. The pistol wasn't loaded. I started out to pawn it. Don't strike me again. I throw up the sponge."

"Don't be afraid," said his companion; "I'm taking you home. What is the number of your room?"

"No. 8—third floor—will have a light in the window—she always does when I'm out; but I'm awful sick and faint, and my head feels as big as a barrel."

The carriage now stopped in front of a house in William Street. There was a light in the third-story window, and a woman's face looked out on hearing the sound of the carriage-wheels.

The driver jumped down and assisted the disabled man into the house.

"What's your fare, driver?" said the stranger.

"Three dollars, sir, cos this has been a hawful wet job, and I have sprained my wrist liftin' that gentleman, and won't be able to drive for a week."

"There's five for you," was the reply. "Now put off; we shall not want you any more."

"Thankee, sir," said coachee. "I knowed you was a gentle-

man by the cut of your jib. May you die in a feather-bed!" and with this hearty wish he drove off.

The stranger then assisted his companion up-stairs, and, after some trouble, succeeded in landing him on the third floor. A door stood wide open. "That's my room," said the robber as he entered the apartment and tumbled upon a sofa.

As the stranger followed his companion into the room, a most beautiful vision struck his sight. A girl of eighteen stood in the center of the room, awaiting the return of her father, whom she had been expecting for the past two hours.

Her lips, half open with expectation and anxiety, showed a set of teeth like pearls. Her beautiful arms were bare, and a light shawl was thrown over her shoulders. Her tiny feet were incased in a pair of faded pink slippers, and her flaxen hair hung in graceful ringlets down her back. Her beautiful blue eyes were swimming in tears of anxiety. Altogether, the stranger was certain he had never beheld a being half so beautiful.

As soon as her father fell on the sofa she flew toward him and clasped his head in her arms, covering his face with kisses. "My darling papa," she said, "what has happened to you? Who has done you this fearful wrong? May God forgive him, for I never will!"

The stranger stood quietly observing the pair, and wondering that such an ill-looking father should be blessed with so beautiful a child.

"I don't know anything about it, my darling," said the father. "Give me some brandy, quick, for I believe I am dying."

The girl flew to the adjoining room, and returned with a bottle and tumbler. Filling the glass one third full, she handed it to her father, who drank it eagerly, exclaiming, "Ah! that has saved my life." Then he fell back on the sofa as if he would go to sleep.

"But, papa dear," said the daughter, her eyes filling with tears, "how did you get into this dreadful condition? What has happened? You have been cruelly used."

"Ask that gentleman," replied her father, "and thank him, for he brought me home."

"I found him at the south end of the Park," said the stranger, "lying senseless on the ground in the rain. I procured a hack and brought him home."

"Oh, thank you, sir, a thousand times," exclaimed this young woman. "May God bless you!" And she wept and kissed her fa-

ther's wounds until he rather pushed her away. He was a piteous sight to behold. His head was swollen, his eyes nearly closed, and his nose had increased in size until it was out of all proportion.

"What vexes me most, darling," said the father, "is that any man should be able to say that he could knock me down, for I never yet met the man whom I couldn't handle with ease. The man who served me such a trick must have been a powerful fellow."

"But, papa, who would want to knock you down? What did you do to provoke it?"

"Perhaps," interrupted the stranger, "it was a robber, and your father may have been robbed."

"I robbed, indeed!" said the man. "Why, sir, there were but twenty-five cents in my exchequer when I left the house, and no bank to which I could go to for more."

"I thought as much," said the stranger to himself—"a case of pure desperation: this beautiful child starving, and he without the means to get her a meal!"

How many men would be saved from crime if some of the philanthropists who will their money to build charitable institutions would, while living, open their purse-strings to suffering humanity! Half the crime that is committed is due to the meanness of these landed philanthropists, who close their hearts while living that they may have monuments erected to themselves after their death.

"But, papa," said the girl, "why did you go out this dark, rainy night? You could not better your condition before to-morrow, and I was not suffering. I wonder you were not afraid to go out when there are so many bad characters about."

"I afraid, child!" said her father, excitedly. "I am not afraid of any two men I ever met with in a fair fight, and no one man could handle me unless he took me unawares, and struck me when I was not expecting it."

To look at him, one could easily realize that he might make good his boast, for he was six feet high and stout in proportion, while his powerful arms and bony hands bespoke strength almost unequalled.

"Yet," said the stranger, "you were knocked down from in front. Can you say that more than one man attacked you?"

"I can't say," replied the father, pondering over his words. "All I know is that only a man of your size and build could have dealt me such a blow. Look here, stranger," he said, "you have taken great interest in my case. It can't be that there are many

men of your size and strength in New York. I gave the man who struck me cause. Tell me, was it you that knocked me down, and then generously brought me home?"

The stranger was a young man of perhaps thirty years. His beard was a tawny auburn, while his hair was of a chestnut color. He was rather good-looking, but his face was weather-beaten from much exposure. His blue eyes had a kindly look in them, and he did not appear to be a person that would knock a man down for a slight cause. At first sight he did not appear the equal in size to the man lying upon the sofa; but, on closer examination, one would say he was the stronger of the two. His deep chest, measuring at least fifty inches, and his large neck, set upon muscular shoulders, showed him capable of exerting immense strength. His whole form was beautifully symmetrical, and he had the advantage of fifteen years in point of age over his assailant, who was now pondering over these things while waiting for the stranger to answer.

"And are these the thanks I get for bringing you home on a night like this, when I found you dying in the mud? Couldn't I have got rid of the job by merely calling the police and letting them take care of you? What object could I have in knocking you down, and then going to all the trouble and expense of bringing you here?"

"Yes, papa," said the daughter, "how could you be so foolish as to hint such a thing to this kind gentleman, who has done so much for you? Poor, dear papa, his head is confused, and he knows not what he says."

"Yes, I do, my child," said the father. "My senses are becoming clearer every minute, and there are circumstances connected with the events of this night that make me think a brave and generous man might punish me first, and then, in the goodness of his heart, assist me."

"Oh, papa, papa!" exclaimed the girl, "your mind is out of order. How could any one who knocked you down be called generous? How could you aggrieve him of a dark night in the street? No, papa, blame the robbers, and no one else."

Meanwhile the younger man stood, with his arms folded, leaning against the mantelpiece, his right foot thrown over his left, showing to fine advantage his muscular limbs.

"I hope, sir," said the girl, going up to the young man in an imploring manner, "that you will not take offense at anything my

father may say, for he is suffering and is not himself. He will, I am sure, make you the most humble apology for his unjust suspicions."

"I shall take no offense, young lady, at anything your father says. A man who has never before met his equal in a hand-to-hand encounter naturally feels sore at meeting one who has defeated him. A stray shot in a battle between two ships often gives the victory; hence it doesn't follow that the man who knocked your father down could do it in a fair stand-up fight." He looked smilingly at the man on the sofa as he spoke.

"But, sir," said the other, "excuse me; you have not yet answered my question. I owe you my life, and perhaps more. There are extenuating circumstances that would free the man who knocked me down from any blame; and hence I ask you again, as a gentleman, did you do it?—for only such muscles as yours could strike such a blow."

"Are you determined," said the stranger, "that I shall answer you?"

"Yes," he replied, "for my own peace of mind. I can not sleep until I know whether it was you that punished me."

"Well, then," said the stranger, "if you will have it: I am the man."

"I knew it," said the other, "and I thank you for your kindness to me."

"Kindness!" cried the young girl, approaching the stranger with flashing eyes. "You cowardly wretch! Do you dare acknowledge that you knocked my poor father down? I take back all the good thoughts I had of you."

"Hold, young lady," said the stranger; "wait till you hear my story. I did it in self-defense, to save my own life. Your father was the aggressor."

"I don't believe it," replied the girl, and she burst into tears, for something told her it was true that her father was in fault.

"Yes, Flossy," said the father, "what the gentleman says is true, and he might have handed me over to the police—"

"Which I had not the slightest intention of doing. I saw into the case at once—that it was desperation for your family suffering from want."

But Flossy's tears still flowed, and she would not be comforted. "Oh," she cried, "you cruel man! why did you strike him so hard?"

"Indeed, Miss Flossy," said the young man, "I thought I struck very easy. I could not regulate my strength, he was so sudden."

"Don't call me Miss Flossy," cried the young woman, stamping her foot. "I am only Flossy to those I love; and I hate you for beating my poor father. I don't care what he did to you—I shall always hate you."

"Then," said the stranger, "I am no longer of any use here, where I hoped to bring happiness, since I find my reward only in being hated. Here, sir, is your pistol, which I picked up from the ground," and he laid a handsome silver-mounted weapon on the table.

The robber started when he recognized the pistol, and he hung down his head with shame.

His daughter's quick eye divined his feelings. "Why, papa," she said, "that's one of your dueling-pistols. What were you doing with it out to-night?" and she looked searchingly into his eyes.

Flossy's father could not endure her inquiring looks, and he jumped from the sofa and walked excitedly across the room. "You might have saved me, sir, this final mortification, and have been generous to the last. My daughter will despise me now."

"I could not retain your property," said the stranger; "but it seems I have done more harm than good to-night. And now, Mr. Edgar Brice, I must wish you good-night, and if you want any assistance from me, leave your name on a card at the restaurant, corner of Leonard Street and Broadway, and I will come to you."

As the stranger spoke these words, the girl gave a shriek and the father turned pale. The latter rushed to the door and put his back against it, holding a heavy iron bar in a menacing attitude.

"You either know too much of me," he said, "or you don't know enough. How did you become possessed of my name? Are you here to capture me as a fugitive from justice? You and I shall not part so easily as you think. We shall see who is the strongest when we stand fairly face to face."

The stranger looked coolly at him, and said, "Has it not struck you that if I had any designs upon you I could have carried them out after you had pointed a pistol at my head, and lay helpless at my feet? I had only to call the watch, and you would have gone to jail. Instead of doing this, I brought you home to your daughter."

"But," said the other, "how do I know you have not some hid-

den motive concealed under your apparent kindness? Before you leave here I must have some security that you mean me no harm."

The stranger put his hand in his breast-pocket and drew out a pistol, and with the other hand produced a wicked-looking dirk-knife with a blade a foot long.

"See!" said he, sternly; "what is your iron bar against these? I could kill you in a moment; and"—taking a silver shield from his pocket—"I have but to raise that window and whistle to have the police come to my aid."

The elder man was quite appalled at his coolness, and lowered the iron bar. The stranger took it in his hands and twisted it into such a shape that it was no longer available to bar the door or use as a weapon.

Brice, as we must now call him, sat down on the sofa, and, putting his hands over his face, exclaimed, "I am in your power; do with me as you please. You have the strength of the devil, and it's useless to contend with you. I put your life in peril; take mine if you think proper."

"The proof that I do not want to harm you," said the young man, "is that you are safe in your own home. The proof that I desire to help you is that I remain in your house after your rather rude treatment. I will leave the matter to your daughter, although she did tell me a few moments ago that she hated me."

"Yes," said the girl, "but that was before I knew dear papa pointed a pistol at you in the Park; and now papa will, I am sure, make you an apology."

"I will go on my knees to him, Flossy," said her father, "if he will only give me his forgiveness and friendship."

"There's my hand," said the stranger, "and you will find it a good one to lean on. And now, sir, let us sit down quietly and discuss your case. Let me look into your affairs and see what can be done to help you."

"In the first place," said Brice, "tell me your name, and please inform me how you discovered mine."

"My name," said the young man, "is Robert le Diable, and my home is on the street. I am to be found there all day long; but a card left for R. D. at the restaurant I mentioned will always find me. I found your name, or the name you own to be yours, written on your pocket-book when I was trying to find your street and number by looking through it."

"I did own to the name once," replied Brice, "but I shall go under another name hereafter."

"I hope," said his daughter, "you will pick out a pretty one. I should so like to be called Flossy Carrolton, after aunt."

"So be it," said Brice; "you are Flossy Carrolton from to-day, and don't forget it. Brice is dead, and here goes the pocket-book into the fire."

"My good friend," said Flossy to Robert le Diable, "hadn't you better change *your* name? I could never call you by that ugly word *Diable*, for you know I understand French."

"Then call me Mr. Robert; that's the name I go by."

"Don't feel hurt," said Flossy, "for you are too good-looking to have such an ugly name. Call yourself Robert Glendoline—that would suit you so well."

Flossy was but a child, although a woman in years, and, the effects of her late excitement having worn off, she was once more the lively little kitten that soothed her father's sad and lonely hours.

"Now, Flossy," said her father, "go to bed. I want to talk with this gentleman, and don't want you here." Whereupon Flossy, kissing him affectionately, and dropping a courtesy to Mr. Robert, disappeared into the adjoining room.

During all the excitement of the last hour Flossy, though caught in *deshabille*, did not fail to keep her person properly covered. Only once did she drop the shawl from her beautiful shoulders, which she might have been proud to exhibit, so beautiful were they; and so guileless was she that she had appeared without her stockings before the stranger.

When Flossy had retired, Brice said to Robert, "Now, that we are alone, I will unbosom myself to you. I can not appear in a worse light to you than I do at present, after an attempt to rob you, and then, after your generous behavior, threatening you with an iron bar. Good heavens! only to think: if you had been in the humor to do so, you might have twisted that bar around my neck and then turned me over to the police. I am a gentleman, Mr. Robert, and if I have been temporarily brutalized it is because I have been driven almost to despair by the sight of my dear child suffering for the simple necessities of life, when, until the past year, she had never wanted for anything. When I went out to-night it was for the purpose of pawning my pistol to get food for to-morrow. Everything else that was available had long since been disposed of. As I entered the Park, the devil tempted me, and you know the re-

sult. I was well punished for my folly. I have been three weeks in this city, and have been unable to obtain employment. I have no friends here, and people don't often pick one up in the street as you have done. I left England with a bad stain upon me, and the broad Atlantic did not wash it off, notwithstanding we were forty days on the passage. The trouble with me was this: I was chief clerk in a bank, and took a hundred pounds to meet a pressing difficulty, expecting to return the money at the end of the month. Unfortunately, I was detected before I could replace it. The laws of England are very severe, and do not discriminate between a large and a small offense. I knew that I should be prosecuted if I remained in England; so I secretly departed at night with Flossy in the mail-coach for Liverpool. There I found a ship on the point of sailing for New York. I arrived here with only forty pounds in my pocket. Flossy does not know why we left England. She was delighted with the change, and never asks questions. I hired these two bedrooms and a sitting-room for twenty dollars a month, and have hitherto had my meals sent to me from a caterer's; but my credit ended when my purse was empty.

"Now you know all, sir. I am by nature a gentleman, and my instincts are honorable, but I have not sufficient character to bear adversity like a man. If I can get employment, I shall do well; if I don't, I shall have to cut my throat and leave poor Flossy to the charity of the world. Her mother died ten years ago, and she has no one but me to look to."

"Your case is by no means desperate," said Robert. "Every day we hear of instances of men driven to crime for the want of a little assistance, while wealthy scoundrels that have ground the faces of the poor and robbed widows and orphans, go scot-free. You are a saint compared to such as they. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do: I will start you with a salary of two hundred dollars a month—you to be my coadjutor in a business that will pay well. If you suit, I will do better for you."

"Your offer," said Brice, "is beyond my fondest expectations. The salary you mention is more than I have had for years, since I took to horse-racing, which swallowed up all my property."

"Of course," said Robert, "you are an accountant, and can keep books?"

"Yes," replied Brice, "that was my business."

"Then," said the other, "the matter is settled. But you will have to work for me somewhat blindly, and ask no questions."

"I agree to anything," said Brice, "that will bring me in twenty-four hundred dollars a year."

"I will procure you another set of apartments," said Robert, "and I will advance you two hundred dollars to fit yourself out in a quiet way, so that the people of the house where you are going will have proper respect for you. Everything in New York depends on first appearances; even new trunks have a great effect. Should you require more money, I will let you have it. I will have the rooms fitted in a manner that I am sure will be agreeable to your daughter."

"My God, sir!" said Brice, "how can I place myself under such obligations to a stranger, who may be, for what I know, leading me to destruction? I must have a better understanding of what you intend before I go further in this business."

"Just as you please," said Robert. "I couldn't well lead you into worse scrapes than you got yourself into. But as I see I have to deal with a man who doesn't appreciate the magnanimity I have displayed toward him, I will take my leave—wishing you good-night," and he moved toward the door.

"For heaven's sake, don't leave me!" said Brice. "I am a fool and a churl. I will serve you to the best of my ability, with no more doubts or fears. You will never hear an objection from me again, no matter what you tell me to do."

"Well and good," said Robert. "Now I must bid you good-night; my people are waiting for me, and they will think I have been kidnapped." So, placing the money on the table and shaking Brice's hand, he departed.

The Englishman pondered long and deeply over the events of the night. He did not know whether to consider himself a lucky man in encountering such good fortune, or a fool to embark in an enterprise about which he knew absolutely nothing.

"But," said he to himself, "I can't starve, and he can deliver me over to the police whenever he pleases. He can ruin me if he likes. Yet I think I have one hold on him: he couldn't keep his eyes off Flossy, and their acquaintanceship will soon ripen into love. With a son-in-law like that by my side, I could walk over all New York; and if his purse is as well lined as it seems to-night, I can never want for a bottle of brandy."

With that he helped himself to a glass of the fiery liquid, and retired to bed.

CHAPTER X.

ROBERT LE DIABLE'S HOME.

It was after midnight when Robert le Diable again found himself in the street. It was still dark and rainy, and his heavy clothes were soaked with moisture.

But he seemed to care nothing for the weather, and strode on as rapidly and easily as when he commenced his wafer-sticking rounds in the morning.

He passed along William Street to John Street, and thence up to Broadway, which he kept until he came to Broome Street. Here he turned to the right, and, going about six blocks, he passed, where the buildings were very sparse, up a dark alley, and stopped before a door in a brick wall inclosing the back-yard of a house. He placed his finger on a concealed spring, and the door flew silently open. As he did so, the whine of an animal could be heard on the rear porch, as if its acute instincts heralded a visitor.

Robert le Diable placed his finger on a portion of the wall of the house that was covered with wood. A narrow door opened to admit him, and closed behind him. Another whine of the animal showed that this also had been noticed.

In another moment he entered a room entirely paneled with walnut wood. Candles were on the table, and a wood-fire was burning brightly on the hearth.

Robert le Diable flung himself into an arm-chair before the fire. "This is comfortable!" he exclaimed. "How long will it last?"

After drinking a glass of wine from a bottle that stood upon the table, he touched a knob on the wall, and the sound of a cuckoo-clock echoed through the house. There was the sound of a door shutting, then steps could be heard approaching. The door of the room opened, and a lovely girl stood there, her eyes beaming with pleasure.

"Come in, Myra," said Robert le Diable. "I am here at last—only an hour later than three weeks ago I said that I would be."

The girl approached in a crouching attitude, as an Eastern slave would do, and, kneeling at his side, kissed his hand respectfully; then, looking up into his face, which was smiling fondly upon her, she said, "I am so glad you have come. Time has passed so

dearly without you, and you are so regular in returning that, when your hour came and I didn't hear the cuckoo-clock, I became very uneasy. Even Aysha missed you, and has been whining ever since eleven o'clock."

Robert le Diable looked at the beautiful girl kneeling before him, seemingly with great affection. He raised her to her feet, and said, "Don't kneel to me, child; that is an observance due only to God."

He put his arm around her, and, drawing her toward him, seemed about to kiss her.

The girl's form quivered as she held her face up expectantly. She closed her eyes, and her rich, ripe lips trembled with emotion. Robert started back. "No, child," he said, "your lips should not be pressed by mine when you are betrothed to another." He then kissed her softly on the forehead, and walked toward the fire.

The girl stood where he had left her, with her head bowed in deep humility and her beautiful hands crossed upon her breast. Suddenly she raised her head, and, extending her arms beseechingly, she approached him, and, kneeling at his feet, clasped his hand with her trembling fingers. "Oh, do not doom me to this!" she said. "Though Walter is all that any one could honor and respect, I have no love for him, such as a woman should have for the man she is to marry. Don't send me from you; let me stay here, where I am happy. I can never know anywhere else such kindness, as you have extended to me; and Walter would not wish to unite himself to one who can not love him, no matter how much she may like and respect him. We can never be anything but brother and sister."

"Why, Myra," said Robert, "you astonish me! I thought this matter was settled months ago."

"Ah!" said she, "I didn't know my own heart then, and I partly promised you to marry Walter; but I find that love won't come at any one's beck and call. Love is perpetual joy—not such pain as you would fasten upon me by marrying me to Walter. I would scorn a throne if I had to share it with one whom I could not love. One hour of joy is worth to me more than the wealth of the Indies!"

"You romantic little puss!" said Robert, affectionately, while a tear stood in his eye. "This is what I get for sending you to a fashionable boarding-school, where you have been reading novels

and neglecting the more solid branches of education. Rise from your knees, child ; you unman me."

"I will not rise," she said, "until you promise not to send me away from you." She spoke so beseechingly that he could do no less than promise something in order to console her.

He lifted her up, and said, "Well, Myra, we will not talk about it to-night. I won't mar the pleasure of my return by any selfish conduct, and you shall never do anything you do not want to. Poor Walter, though, will feel this dreadfully."

"Oh, no," she answered, "he seldom mentions the subject to me, and I think has only acquiesced to please you, and repay some of the many obligations he is under."

"Ah, Myra !" said Robert, "you little know what exquisite beauty is yours, and what a loss it would be to any man that had set his heart upon you not to obtain your hand."

Myra's beauty was such that one could gaze upon it by the hour. She was in her nineteenth year, of medium height, and so perfect in face and form that, to try and improve either, would be like painting the lily or gilding refined gold. Her eyes were large and of a hazel color, and her dark, auburn hair hung in rich plaits down her shoulders.

Her costume was somewhat Oriental. On her head was a crimson fez trimmed with a blue silk tassel, such as are worn in Turkish harems. Her bodice was of blue silk over a rich lace vest, and her skirt of fine muslin, the lower edge embroidered with silken flowers. Her little feet were incased in blue silk slippers, with gold bows upon the instep ; and her arms, half-bare, were ornamented with rich bangles, the gifts of Robert le Diable on her several birthdays.

"Mr. Robert," said Myra, "you take, then, no account of me, and you think less of Walter's happiness than you should. Think what a fate would be his to find himself united to one who could not possibly love him, and who would be obliged to pass her life in perpetual sorrow. Oh, think of me, wandering through life without an aim ! Oh, no, do not doom me to such a fate ! I will die to serve you and do your bidding. Do you think I can ever forget the cold, pitiless night, six years ago, when you picked me up in the street, where, for the first time in my life, I went to beg something to keep life in my poor dying mother ? Can I forget how you wrapped your cloak around my shivering form and went to my poor mother's bedside, who had died in my absence, and how you

consoled and comforted the poor orphan in the hour of her bereavement? Ah!" she continued, "I never shall forget the ecstasy I felt when you brought me to this comfortable home, and then brought good Mrs. Reed to lead me in the way of truth and to practice the precepts of my dear mother. Can I forget how you provided me with teachers to instruct me in all that a good woman should know? Yet now, when I am of an age to apply the knowledge I have acquired, you wish to turn me over to some one who will find neither joy nor poetry in me, but merely a deep well of tears. Ah, no, Mr. Robert, you will not do that! Let me stay with you a while longer, and in your hours of weariness try to drive away the sorrows which I imagine I sometimes see weighing you down. Let me sing to you, prattle to you in French, your favorite language. You have given me much to be thankful for; let me return in a small way your favors. Now, you will, won't you?" and she put her hands on his shoulders and looked up into his face imploringly.

Robert could not help clasping the beautiful girl in his arms and kissing her passionately. She laid her beautiful head upon his breast, as if that were the haven she sought and where she would like to linger forever.

At length he unclasped her hands and raised her head from his breast, and seated her upon a chair by his side. He was overcome with emotion, while Myra's face shone bright with rapture as her passionate eyes expressed the happiness of her soul.

"Myra, my child," said Robert le Diable, "my life is a precarious one. Events may occur at a moment's notice that will separate me from you forever. Under the circumstances, I thought it my duty to provide a protector for you. You are unfit to battle with the world, and Walter was my choice. I shall never force you to do anything against your will; but, in case anything should happen to me to prevent my return to you, let me show you the provision I have made for your support."

He pressed a spring, and one of the panels in the wall moved aside, disclosing a small closet.

"In this closet," he said, "are twenty-five thousand dollars in money, and some jewelry to remember me by."

"As if I should want anything to remember you by!" exclaimed Myra, sobbing. "Oh, don't talk so sadly; you will break my heart!" Then, brightening up, she exclaimed, "If they took you to the end of the world I should find you! I will never leave you."

"Well," said Robert, "remember this secret deposit of money in case you need it for any purpose. And now, Myra, get me a cup of tea, for I am tired and want some refreshment."

Myra went quickly out into a small and handsomely furnished dining-room, and soon returned with the announcement that tea was on the table. Taking his hand, she led him out to supper.

Everything on the tea-table was in good taste, and Myra, with a smiling countenance, presided at the urn; for her heart was made happy by the promise she had received that she need do nothing contrary to her wishes.

She knew too little of the world, and of the accidents to which men are liable, to let Robert's obscure hints worry her. She had always had her own way, and felt that now she had a promise that she was not to leave her benefactor, which was all she had to ask for in life.

The tea passed very cheerfully, Robert listening to Myra's pleasant voice relating the occurrences that had taken place during his three weeks' absence.

"Now," said Robert, "let me see Aysha; for if she does not see me, she will whine all night. I can hear her now."

Myra went out of the room, and soon reappeared, leading a small lioness by a chain. The animal crawled up to her master, and looked into his face affectionately. Robert patted her head, and she licked his hand, then lay down at his feet, closing her eyes as if supremely happy.

"She loves you so much!" said Myra.

"She ought to," said Robert. "I rescued her from slavery and death. There's an interesting story connected with this lioness, and I'll tell you about it to-morrow. You are now of an age when you should know my history, that you may understand my anxiety about your future welfare."

Myra placed her hand upon his lips. "No more of that to-night," said she. "I am happy now—do not disturb my joy." And they talked of other things.

Robert le Diable presently consulted his watch, and, finding it past two o'clock, exclaimed, "It's time for us all to be in bed. Myra, you will lose all the roses from your cheeks, and I shall be fit for nothing to-morrow." Taking up a candle, he kissed the girl on the forehead, patted Aysha on the head, and went up-stairs.

Myra led the lioness out by her chain and fastened her to her cage on the back porch. Then she sought her chamber—a pretty

little room, simply furnished, looking like the abode of innocence and peace. Myra knelt in prayer, thanking God for his mercies and for the happiness which filled her breast, and then slept the sleep of innocence, without a disturbing care upon her mind.

When Robert le Diable reached his chamber, he placed the candle on the mantel and sat down to think. What a whirl his mind had been in since six o'clock that morning, when he started on his mission of distributing wafers !

But what did it all mean ? In what could this man be engaged that required so much mystery—he who seemed to be surrounded with luxury and able to dispense money with prodigality, yet who entered his own house by intricate windings, as if he did not wish to be seen ?

Men who have nothing to conceal from the public do not act in this way. Yet there was nothing about the premises that indicated the owner to be anything not respectable and upright.

Robert's chamber was a model of comfort and elegance. To look at him in his suit of coarse, gray cloth, one would suppose him to be free from luxurious tastes ; but such was not the case.

In all about him he saw the hand of Myra, who thought nothing good enough for him, and lavished the money he gave her upon his bedroom, and in improving the comforts of his house. His dressing-table was covered with specimens of Myra's handiwork in silk embroidery. She had selected the furniture—a set of mahogany, beautifully carved by an artist hand. There were two large arm-chairs, a lounge upholstered in blue damask, and a book-case containing a selection of choice volumes. He loved to look at all these things, as he loved also to see Myra dressed in her Oriental costume.

In this retreat he breathed the air of freedom and rest from the cares which beset him in the city, and he would have liked to spend here the remainder of his life.

This had been Robert's home for five years ; but during that time no stranger had entered its doors. He seemed to come to it as a resting-place when tired of the outside world.

Here he could forget for a while the mercenary conflict which raged without, the everlasting greed for money which he saw depicted on the faces of the covetous wretches that rushed about like ghouls, sucking the life-blood from the hearts of those who had not the ability to hold their own in the struggle for existence. Here

there was no backbiting, no abuse of friends ; all was peace and happiness.

But, heavens ! what a revelation had this night made to him ! He was too much a man of the world not to be able to read the heart of that innocent girl, whom he looked upon almost as his own child, and on whom he had showered benefits without an idea that her gratitude would culminate in love. He could not be mistaken, though the knowledge came upon him like a thunderbolt and disarranged all his cherished plans. He had given Myra to one for whom he had a strong affection—a noble heart that would beat for her as long as life lasted ; yet how could he sacrifice this dear child to carry out his own plans, when he knew that every fiber of her being quivered with love for himself ? So far he had never thought of love ; his life had been too busy to become entangled in the softer passions, although his heart was as big as the ocean so far as love for his kind extended. He had often thought that if he ever did lose his heart it would be with one who resembled Myra, though he had never dreamed of *her*. She was to him always a child—the little waif he had picked up in the street that rainy night, and whom he had brought to his home out of pure charity.

He had never fully realized until to-night how beautiful Myra was. Like a bud that one puts into a vase at night and finds unfolded in the morning, so had Myra sprung from girlhood to womanhood, with all a lovely woman's grace and cultivation, but losing none of those girlish ways that generally depart from the female sex after the age of twenty—ways that add immeasurably to the charms of a woman.

Robert had never once reflected that the time would come when Myra's heart would swell with passion's throb or love's fond sigh, nor did he ever stop to consider whether her heart would open to receive the tender libations of love. He had thought to secure what he had supposed would be her happiness in his own way, and without consulting her disposition, for he considered Walter one whom any woman would delight to marry.

Now he awoke to the fact that a man knows but little of the heart of a young and beautiful woman. He was now perfectly aware that Myra loved but him, the rough, hardy man with weather-beaten face.

The conceit of Myra being in love with him rather pleased Robert, while it made him anxious for the young girl's future. He was under thirty years of age, it is true, but the battles he had

fought in his struggle through life made him look older, and he could not imagine how one so young and beautiful could let her heart go out to him. Nevertheless, he felt that she loved him with a love that would never change.

"A short time since," said he to himself, "I could have plucked this rose and worn it near my heart without a fear that there would be a single thorn on the stem to sting me ; but it is now too late. The die is cast, and all I can do is to refrain from giving pain to the heart that loves me. I will so conduct myself toward her that she will learn in time to look upon me simply as a friend." But he forgot the kisses he had received from her trembling lips, and the sigh of happiness that she breathed as he clasped her in his arms. Yet now and then would occur the sweet ecstasy of those moments, and he wished he had known her feelings when last he left her.

Robert retired to rest with many conflicting feelings, and, although he had been upon his feet nearly all that day, he did not close his eyes until near daybreak next morning. It seemed to him that he had hardly slept at all when the breakfast-bell awoke him, but, looking at his watch, he found it was nine o'clock.

When Robert went down to the parlor, Myra, who was playing the piano, jumped up and ran toward him ; but he merely lifted her hand to his lips and kissed it respectfully.

"Thus, Myra," said he, "the ladies of the house in olden times were saluted, and, as you are no longer a child, I must treat you as a woman. It only struck me last night how you had bloomed into maturity and beauty, and your sex is entitled to all the deference we can pay it."

Myra looked disappointed, and her eyes filled with tears, for he had never before omitted kissing her affectionately on the forehead.

"If I am to lose your affection," she said, "because I am a woman in stature while my heart is still that of a child, I am sorry ever to be a woman."

"Sit down, child, and play for me. While I live you will always possess my warmest affection, and no other shall take your place." His heart smote him as he made this last remark.

Myra played for him all his favorite tunes, although her heart felt sad. She could not forget his warm caresses of the day before, and colder ones seemed a mockery to her now. She wondered if he would ever give her a warm embrace again.

Myra did not know that she loved Robert as a lover, but she felt that he was more to her than all the world beside, and that any change in his affection would be like the hand of death laid upon her.

A knock on the door announced that breakfast was ready ; and Myra, taking Robert by the hand as usual, led him to the table.

He smilingly offered his arm, saying, " My princess must be treated with all courtesy." But she would not take it, and retained his hand. When they reached the breakfast-room he saw that her eyes were filled with tears.

" Ah ! " said he to himself, " I have a difficult part to play, but this poor child must not be made to suffer." He did his best to cheer her up with the promise that she should see more of him in the future, and talked of the happy days they would pass together.

In the breakfast-room an elderly lady was seated by the fire, who rose as Robert entered and courtesied respectfully. He extended his hand, saying, " How do you do, Mrs. Reed ? I am so glad to see you ! " She pressed the offered hand in the most respectful manner. This man seemed to command the love and respect of all about him, as if he were a superior being.

Mrs. Reed was the lady that Robert had selected to preside over his house and watch over Myra in his absence. Her husband had been accidentally killed, and she left penniless, without a friend in the world. Robert had given her a helping hand ; and, when Myra came, he introduced Mrs. Reed into the house, where she acted a mother's part toward the young girl.

" I can not tell you how glad I am to see you, Mr. Robert," said Mrs. Reed. " The days pass dully when you are away. I don't know what we should do but for Myra and her piano."

" Well, sit down and pour out the tea, Mrs Reed," said Robert, " and Myra shall sit by me." This drove away the clouds resting on the girl's brow, and breakfast passed merrily.

Mrs. Reed was known in the neighborhood as the lady to whom the house belonged. All bills were contracted and paid by her, and everything went through her hands. When Myra walked abroad, she accompanied her. No one knew that a man ever entered the house, for Robert le Diable always went and came by night. Mrs. Reed never cared to inquire into the mystery. She only knew that Mr. Robert chose to have it so, and that was enough for her. His word was law. So they had lived for the last five years.

If any one had suggested to Mrs. Reed that Myra and her bene-

factor would fall in love with each other, she would have thought the idea preposterous.

Mrs. Reed always took the head of the table at meals ; but, being elderly and delicate, Robert did not exact that she should sit up for him when he returned home at night. Eleven was his hour, and Myra waited for him and gave him his tea.

There were three other members of the household, including a cook who was deaf, who had never been up-stairs, and didn't know that such a person as Robert le Diable was in existence. Mrs. Reed made up her own room and that of Mr. Robert, and Myra attended to hers.

Breakfast over, Robert and Myra returned to the parlor, where the sound of the piano was soon heard, and Myra's sweet voice singing some of the simple lays that her benefactor loved so well.

As Myra sang, Robert seemed lost in deep meditation. Finally Myra stopped playing, and said, "You are tired, Mr. Robert."

"No, child ; I could listen to you forever. Your music carries me back to by-gone years, when my mother used to sing to me. But come here and sit by me, for I have much to say to you."

Myra took a footstool and seated herself at his feet.

"Myra," said he, "I am going to stay at home all day; and, to amuse you, I will tell you the story of my life, which has been an eventful one. When you hear my story you will wonder that I am still alive and possess these muscles of steel—which alone have enabled me to go through hardships enough to have killed any ordinary man."

"Oh," said Myra, "I so long to hear the history of your life !" and, lifting her eyes to his, she placed herself in a listening attitude.

CHAPTER XI.

ROBERT LE DIABLE'S STORY OF HIS LIFE.

"I HAVE never known a mother's love, Myra, since I was six or seven years of age. I don't know who my mother was, or what was her name. I do not even know within a year or two how old I am ; but, as near as I can conjecture, I am about twenty-eight years of age.

"I can remember my mother's face as if I had seen it but yesterday. I shall never forget her, although time and grief must have made a great change in her if she is still living. I have no hope of ever seeing her again, for I have not the least idea of her name or place of residence.

"I can see in my mind's eye her sweet face and mild glance as she bent over my bed at night after hearing me say my prayers, when she would kiss me and bid me go to sleep. That memory haunts me continually. I never close my eyes at night without seeing my mother's beautiful face bending over me. I shall carry that vision with me to the grave. I remember a little boy that played with me. He was, as near as I can recollect, about my own age ; but his face has gone from my memory. I remember, too, an old man who was kind to me and on whose knee I used to sit, listening to his stories. His features faded year by year from my memory like a dream, while the recollection of my mother seems to grow stronger as I grow older.

"They say that the incidents of early youth are more strongly impressed on the mind than those that occur later in life ; but this I hardly believe. The events of youth sometimes come back strongly impressed upon the mind, but they come rather as dreams than as realities.

"I don't know how, or when, or why I left my fond mother. I only remember being at sea in a large ship and that the weather was very stormy. I was sick for many days. Then I saw strange faces around my bed on shore, and I cried for my mother. That night she came to me in my dreams and comforted me. She leaned over me and told me always to say my prayers when I went to bed, which I always did for years. Then came a change. I was in the hands of a task-master who was teaching me to walk the tight-rope.

"It was not a difficult matter, for the rope was placed so near the ground that I had not far to fall should I make a misstep. There were four other little boys under instruction, and there was great emulation among us ; but after a while it got to be irksome, and our task-master would flog us if we didn't perform to suit him. We had to learn to twist our limbs until it seemed that we had no joints, and by the time I was nine or ten years old I could distort my body so that it looked like nothing human.

"Gradually our tight-rope was raised until it was thirty feet above the ground, and we boys were required to run quickly along

it with a balancing-pole in our hands, then to run without the pole, and finally to wheel a small barrow over the rope. If we failed, we were sent to bed without our supper or whipped.

"When I had been about three years under instruction, I was taken to a circus and introduced to the manager, who, as they expressed it, 'put me through my paces.' I was made to perform before him on the tight and slack ropes, turn somersaults from a spring-board, haul myself up a rope 'hand over hand,' as the sailors call it, stand up straight with a small boy on my shoulders, etc. My performance elicited much applause from the manager, who praised my sturdy appearance and pronounced my physique perfect. The manager then made me run around the circus-ring to see what endurance I had, and I kept on until I was nearly exhausted.

"My four companions were put through the same paces as myself; but they could in no way compare with me, and the manager said they required further training.

"Then, after much higgling, a bargain was concluded between my task-master and the manager, and I was sold to the circus-man for five hundred dollars.

"When I found I was to be separated from the four little boys who had been my partners in affliction and my companions in play, I burst into tears. Although I remembered the harshness of my task-master, I was unwilling to leave the boys, for whom I had formed a strong attachment, for we had shared all our joys and sorrows together.

"I was now to be torn away from these little friends and transferred to strangers, who might treat me even worse than my task-master had done.

"When I cried, the wretch said to the manager, 'Oh, he is so fond of me! That's my fault; I am so easy with my boys that they don't learn as fast as they would with a harsh master. Besides, I feed 'em too high; they get too fat.' He all the time knew in his heart that we were almost starved.

"'Well,' said the manager, 'he will have to do his work here; we keep no cats that don't catch mice. I can't afford to pay five hundred dollars for a boy that don't do his work well. Those that won't tumble as we wants 'em, we makes 'em do it. Stop crying, boy, or I'll wallop you!' This, thought I, is worse than before; but I checked my tears and looked as calm as I could.

"'What's this boy's name?' said the manager.

“ ‘I don’t know,’ said the task-master, ‘but the boys calls him Robert le Diable.’

“ ‘Well,’ said the manager, ‘that’s a first-rate name for him.’ So from that day to this I have gone by that name, although I have several others for occasion.

“ ‘Where did you get the boy?’ said the manager.

“ ‘I found him adrift across the water,’ said the other; ‘no one owns him.’

“ ‘You know I must register him,’ said the manager, ‘for the authorities in some places are mighty particular in knowing all about children, and I’m rather particular myself.’

“ ‘All stuff,’ said the task-master; ‘you have been very particular about those I’ve sold you, hain’t you?’

“ ‘Has he any clothes,’ asked the manager, ‘besides those he has on?’

“ ‘Clothes!’ said the other. ‘What’s the use of giving clothes to a child that’s performing all the time? They would cost a fortune. I always make ’em exercise without any clothes. He’s had one new suit and a pair of shoes since he came to me. By going barefoot most of the time he can hold on with his feet the same as a man can do with his hands.’

“ ‘Now, boys,’ said the manager, ‘come round to-night and see the youngster perform. I intend he shall open on the saw-dust as Robert le Diable.’

“That night the circus-tent was beautifully lighted, and all the boys in town thronged around it to read the advertisement concerning my appearance, and to speculate upon my capabilities.

“The lighted tent brought to my mind the dim remembrance of something of the same kind I had seen before; and when the horses began to go round the ring, then I knew I had seen it all somewhere. This memory affected me all the evening, but I managed to go through with my appointed tasks creditably, and elicited thunders of applause.

“I performed one trick not in the bills that brought the house down. After turning a back somersault, I took my feet in my hands and, turning myself into a hoop, rolled around the ring. In my flesh-colored tights and gold spangles I looked like a fire-ball going over the saw-dust. To make the affair more interesting, my four companions, who were present and knew the trick as well as I did, jumped into the ring, turned into hoops, and followed after me, and such an excitement was never before wit-

nessed in that circus-tent. My reputation was established, and from that night Robert le Diable became the chief attraction of the circus.

"I should have mentioned that I still retained in my kit or bag the suit of clothes I wore on the day I was decoyed from home. They were of brown cloth, marked with the initials 'J. G.,' while my cloth cap was marked 'O. G.' I presume these must be the initials of my name, which were driven out of my memory by ill-treatment."

Myra's eyes had been filled with tears for a long time, and she now sobbed outright.

"If the narrative of my unhappy boyhood makes you shed tears, Myra," said Robert, "I don't know what you will do when you hear the sufferings of my early manhood."

Myra dried her tears as well as she could, and Robert proceeded with his story.

"I have that suit of clothes yet," said he, "and never intend to part with it. There was a tiny picture-book of 'Old Mother Hubbard and her Dog' in one of the pockets, marked in ink, 'From Grandpa.' I was so afraid my master would take this from me, that I cut open the lining of my coat and hid it. Perhaps by means of this book I shall yet find out who I am.

"I remained in the circus company until I was about sixteen years old, and had become a marvel in athletic exercises of all kinds. I was stronger, even at that age, than ordinary men, and no one ever exceeded me in activity.

"During the time I was with the circus it spent five years on the continent of Europe, where my exploits attracted great attention, and through me the manager made a good deal of money. The result of my travels was that I learned to speak the French, German, Spanish, and Italian languages, which I have never forgotten. All the education I received was picked up from my intercourse with the world, and, having a good memory, I never forgot what I read.

"Notwithstanding all the money I brought the manager, he treated me with great severity, as he did all others under his control. He once knocked me down when I slipped and failed to perform a double somersault. The blood gushed from my nose and ears, and I was carried off senseless. The audience hissed him and left the circus."

At this point Myra sobbed piteously.

"Reserve your tears, child, for worse things," said Robert, "or, if this recital pains you, I will stop."

"Oh, no," said Myra; "I must hear it to the end, if it kills me."

"Well," said Robert, "I was treated so badly that I determined to run away the first good opportunity that offered. About this time the company went to Marseilles. The brutal manager treated me worse than ever, though I performed feats that none of the others could approach, and did all in my power to please him. It was no use, for he seemed to hate the very sight of me.

"I went down to the mole one day, and there I saw a French brig moving out of the crowd of shipping. As I watched her movements, the captain, a bright young fellow, asked me if I didn't want to be a sailor. I said, 'Yes.' 'Then come with me,' said he, 'and see the world.' 'Wait half an hour until I can get my kit,' I said, 'and I will join you.' 'Oh,' said he, 'you will have plenty of time before we leave the basin, but hurry up.'

"I ran back to the circus-tent and got my bag, which was stored in a covered wagon, where I slept with five other youngsters. One of them was sick in the wagon, and saw me leaving with the bag. 'Where are you going, Diable?' said he, faintly. 'I'm going to sell my old clothes.' 'No,' said he, 'you are going away. God be with you; you'll never see me again.' I clasped his hot hand, bade him a hasty farewell, and left the accursed tent forever.

"I went on board the brig—it was called the *Gazelle*—and reported myself to the captain, and in half an hour we were standing out of the harbor under full sail.

"The next two years, Myra, were the happiest of my life. My woes were soon forgotten in the pleasures of the voyage. We passed through the Straits of Gibraltar and were soon on the great ocean; and, oh! how my heart swelled to think I was a free man and no longer subject to the caprice of a tyrant! Captain Duprey was a charming man, adored by his crew, for sailors become devoted to a kind man and will do anything to please him.

"I became a great favorite with the captain. He was wonderfully pleased with my agility, and astonished at the strength I displayed. Although probably not more than sixteen years old, I was five feet ten inches in height, with limbs like a young Hercules.

"In a month I could beat the smartest seaman in the ship in

getting out to the weather earing, and my performances in the rigging astonished all hands.

"At the Island of Madeira we laid in a cargo of wine for the East Indies, and remained a week at Funchal, enjoying ourselves to our heart's content. We then sailed for Rio de Janeiro, sold part of our cargo, took in sugar, and sailed for Calcutta, and thence proceeded to Canton.

"We spent a year trading in the East Indies, our voyage being a lucrative one. Finally we filled up with teas and silks and all the curiosities peculiar to that part of the world, and returned to Marseilles, where we arrived safely after an absence of eighteen months. Our voyage was so successful that the owners gave each of the crew, myself included, two months' extra wages.

"I spent six months longer on the vessel, during which time she made a voyage up the Mediterranean. On her return to Marseilles, having saved a considerable sum of money, I determined to visit Paris, which I had heard was the most beautiful city in the world. I had been there with the circus, but was never allowed to roam about. I determined then to see it as a man when I had the means of enjoying myself.

"I accordingly shipped on board a vessel bound for Havre, and thence took passage in the diligence for the capital, where I was set down at a third-class inn called 'La Fame,' where I settled myself to stay till my funds gave out.

"As I settled my bills regularly every week, I became a great favorite with Pierre Laroche, the landlord, a good old soul, whose kindness I shall never forget.

"I stayed at the inn three months, indulging myself in all the amusements of Paris. At first I thought there could be no end to my purse, but found the city an expensive place to live in, except for those who go there determined to practice rigid economy. When I found my money running low, I paid my landlord two weeks' board in advance, and determined, before that time should elapse, that I would find some employment.

"The two years on board the *Gazelle* had made a man of me. I was now six feet tall, with powerful muscles. I was not quite so large as I am now, but still able to manage almost any two men. I was a picture of ruddy health, the result of my sea life, joined to a vigorous constitution. I was full of animal spirits, and ready to enter into any venture that might turn up.

"While I was looking around for something to do, I saw a pla-

card in the Champs Élysées announcing the arrival in Paris of the celebrated circus of Monsieur Petard. While reading the announcement, I heard the sound of music, and, walking toward it, was told that the circus company was out on parade, and presently the head of the procession came in sight.

"First came a car, in the shape of a golden swan, drawn by eight powerful horses richly caparisoned, and containing a band of music of twenty pieces. Then came four other gorgeous cars, each drawn by four horses, and containing the circus-riders dressed in their elegant costumes. Forty men and women followed on variegated horses, and in the rear came ten trick-ponies, a cage of performing monkeys, and several huge dogs as large as bears.

"The sight of this procession stirred me, as the sound of a trumpet does an old war-horse. Hard as had been my circus life, I could not forget the triumphs I had achieved in the arena, and I trembled with excitement as I gazed at the pageant.

"What was my surprise to see, in the rear of the procession, a handsome carriage with a banner proclaiming in large letters that Robert le Diable was to exhibit in his wonderful performance on the tight-rope, lifting and throwing weights, and bareback riding.

"I had laid aside this name, thinking it an inconvenient one for a person residing in Paris, and had adopted that of Robert le Preux ; but I was indignant when I saw the name by which I had gained celebrity stolen by another—although it showed my genius had been appreciated.

"The idea now struck me that I would expose the impostor. I had never omitted keeping up my exercises, and in calm weather, when the ship's crew had little to do, I helped them while away many a weary hour with my exhibitions. I would lift a barrel of beef and hold it high above my head. I would take two sixty-pound weights on my little fingers, and swing them around my head as if they were made of light wood, and would turn somersaults upon the hard deck and land upon my feet.

"When visiting foreign countries in the Gazelle, I would ride the wildest horses I could find without saddle or bridle, and, if a horse was unmanageable, it was only necessary to turn him over to me and I would soon bring him under subjection.

"In fact, I could do anything of this kind that any man in the world could do, for my strength and activity were unsurpassed.

"I found that the circus-tent was pitched near the Bois de Boulogne, and I immediately called on Monsieur Petard and in-

formed him that I was the original and only genuine Robert le Diable, offering to expose the pretender to that title, if he would let me appear in the ring that night after the *soi-disant* Robert had finished his performance; and that if M. Petard was not satisfied, after witnessing my performance, that I could beat any man in the world, I would pay him five hundred francs—although, in fact, I had hardly a centime left in my pocket.

“The manager agreed to my proposition, hoping either to win the money or to gain an important addition to his corps. The only trouble was to obtain a suit of performing-clothes that would fit my figure; but M. Petard promised to have all arranged by evening.

“That evening I went to the arena—a much grander affair in every way than the circus-tent in which I had been wont to appear. It was decorated with silk flags and banners, and was calculated to draw the people of Paris, who are taken only with grand exhibitions.

“The horses made their entry and went through with their performances in splendid style. The acrobats had gone to refresh themselves after their labors, when ‘Monsieur Vif, the original Robert le Diable,’ was announced by the clown, and the impostor entered, bowing and scraping to the audience as only a Frenchman can.

“Monsieur Vif was an athletic young fellow of thirty. He commenced by throwing about five small boys very much at the risk of their necks, spinning plates on the point of an umbrella, opening the latter while the plates were in motion, and a number of other sufficiently common feats. Then he lifted a sixty-pound weight, held it at arms’ length, and threw it across the circus; then he went through the trapeze performance, and, bowing and grimacing to the audience, turned to leave the arena, when he perceived me at his side.

“‘Ladies and gentlemen,’ said I, addressing the audience, at the same time laying my hand on Monsieur Vif’s shoulder, ‘this man is an impostor. I am the genuine Robert le Diable, as I will soon show you.’

“Monsieur Vif looked very indignant, but the audience shouted. They thought it part of the performance, especially when the clown sang out, ‘One centime on the big fellow.’

“Vif now realized that he was about to be exposed, and he said fiercely to me, ‘You are a liar! Take that,’ aiming, as he spoke, a

blow at my head. I caught him by the wrist, twisted his arm till it was nearly dislocated, and then pitched him into a net that was slung ten feet from the ground to catch children that fell from the tight-rope. 'Lie there,' said I, 'you miserable caricature of Robert le Diable !'

"The audience still thought this was part of the play, and shouted louder than ever. The manager was in ecstasies, and the clown scrutinized me with a lorgnette made of gingerbread.

"I now went to work in earnest, and I assure you I astonished the audience. I had four men on my shoulders at one time, and, with the assistance of another powerful fellow, formed a pyramid of seven. I then took a hundred-pound weight in each hand, raised them high above my head, and ran around the ring, the clown trying in vain to overtake me and shouting, 'That shows that Monsieur Vif is a liar ! If I catch him I will throw him into the net.'

"I performed that night some wonderful feats of strength, such as bending iron bars, pitching heavy weights, etc., which nearly set the audience crazy, and made the spectator in the net feel greatly dismayed.

"Then they brought me a wild horse, which no one had ever been able to ride, and which took four men to hold.

"'There, Mr. Robert le Diable,' said the clown, 'is your brother. If he doesn't eat you up, you can have my gingerbread.'

"I seized the bridle and looked the animal steadily in the eye, saying to the men, 'Let him go.' The horse reared and pulled back, snorting with temper ; but I brought his head down, and, giving a twist with my hand to the curb, I threw him on his side and planted my foot on his neck.

"'This is the devil, sure enough,' said the clown. 'Bring us a bottle of holy water.'

"The horse, having recovered from his astonishment, began to kick and struggle, and I lifted him, when he jumped at me with his mouth wide open. Giving the curb another twist, I threw him again ; but he was up directly, and struck at me with his right fore-foot. I caught his leg and held it, and, giving the curb a twist, flung him again. I had dealt with wild horses before, and had encountered worse cases than this.

"The animal now refused to get up ; so, taking a whip, I belabored him soundly. He rose in a perfect foam, and trembling all over ; but he held his head down and made no movement. Throwing the bridle over his neck, I jumped upon his back and

plied the whip until he flew around the track like mad. In twenty minutes from the time I took hold of the brute I had conquered him.

"I wound up by taking my feet in my hands and performing the hoop-trick ; and, after going twice around the ring, I rolled out into the back tent.

"The audience were so much delighted with my performance that they called me out. My success was assured, and, before I left that night, the manager secured my services at a salary of six hundred francs a month.

"I continued to delight Paris for several weeks, when the circus had to leave for the provinces. I had formed many acquaintances among the gentlemen of Paris, who saw in me something better than the ordinary mountebank. I dressed well, and was often invited by gentlemen to dine. My company pleased them, for I had seen a good deal of the world, and had a pleasant way of relating my adventures.

"Among the acquaintances I thus formed was a man who had the *entrée* into the best society in Paris. This was the Count of Montebello, a very accomplished gentleman of the most fascinating manners. He took a great fancy to me, and often had me to dine with him. I became much attached to him, and would have done anything in my power to serve him.

"I have hurried over many of the events of my early life, Myra, but I think I have told you enough to give you an idea of my unhappy condition from the age of six up to that of sixteen."

"Yes," said Myra, pressing his hand, "and my heart bleeds to think of the sufferings you have undergone."

"Ah !" said Robert, "I fear you will hardly have the fortitude to hear the narrative of what I am about to relate. The Count of Montebello several times offered to introduce me into society, saying to me, 'Your face, figure, and address will make your fortune, and you are throwing away your talents in the profession you are now following. Give up the circus and take to something else.'

"'What else can I do ?' I replied. 'This is all the business I know, and I could not obtain as large a salary at anything else.'

"'Pshaw !' said he, 'you speak five languages ; that's a good fortune in itself. You could put yourself forward as an instructor of languages, and, with my influence and that of my friends, you could double your present salary. Every woman in Paris of any note would patronize you, and there's no knowing what good fortune

you would fall heir to. Those magnetic eyes of yours would win the hearts of the women.'"

Myra started as if something had frightened her.

"The count," continued Robert, "constantly resumed this subject, and at last told me he was so anxious I should leave the circus that he would give me the appointment of his secretary at the same salary I was then receiving. 'It need not be known,' he said, 'that you are my secretary, and you can establish yourself in Paris as a linguist. I can give you an introduction to the prime minister, who will be glad to give you employment as a translator.' The arguments of this man were so seductive that I agreed to all his wishes.

"I called the same afternoon on Monsieur Petard, and he was much astonished when he found I was determined to leave him.

"He offered to double my salary, for he realized that I was the chief attraction of his circus. I told him that I was now more than ever determined to leave, inasmuch as I was satisfied he had been unjust to me in not paying me more for my services. Then he threatened to call the law to his aid and compel me to fulfill my contract.

"Ah, my friend,' said I, 'how easy it would be for me to lay myself up with a sprained foot or arm and make you pay the doctor's bills!'

"*Sapristi!*' exclaimed he, 'I didn't think of that!'

"My friend,' said I, 'you are going to travel in the provinces. That poor M. Vif, who has played the part of sub under me, can take my name of Le Diable. He has learned my way of doing things, and the country people will never know the difference between M. Vif and the veritable Diable.'

"Yes,' said Monsieur Vif, who was standing by listening to us, 'I assure you, M. Petard, that M. Robert speaks to the point, and I shall not disappoint you.'

"Paff!' said the manager, 'that wild horse will eat you the first time you attempt to ride him.' 'I will undertake all but riding the horse,' said M. Vif. 'But how about making a hoop of yourself and going twice around the ring?' 'Well, we'll omit that,' said M. Vif. 'How about swinging two-hundred-pound weights about your head and running with them around the circle?' 'I can use sheet-iron weights of the same size,' said M. Vif, 'and I can imitate very well all the other things.' 'Well, needs must when the devil drives,' said M. Petard. The affair was settled, and I rejoined my patron at dinner.

"‘Now,’ said the count, ‘Le Preux, we must begin business this very evening. I am going to introduce you to the Marquis and Marquise of Cassarole. They are the leading people in Paris. Once get a footing there, and you can go where you will in this city. The marquise is very fascinating, they say, for I don’t think she affects me, although she is always very civil, and, as she knows I have an unlimited number of acquaintances among young men of note, she requests me to bring them with me when I think proper.

"‘The marquis, unlike his wife, is no longer young. She is but twenty-two. As he is very rich, he has settled a million francs on the marquise, the interest of which is her pin-money. They live in a splendid mansion on the Avenue de Clichy, and, although the marquise is propriety itself, she adores men of your style.’

"So it was arranged that at nine o’clock the Count of Montebello should call for me at my new lodgings in the Rue Tivoli—for I had left the Hôtel la Fame—in his handsome cabriolet, and I was to accompany him to the mansion of the marchioness, who was to hold a reception for a few select people.

"In fifteen minutes after the count called at my lodgings we were ascending the marble steps of the Hôtel Cassarole. The entrance to the mansion was lighted by a hundred lamps, and at the door were a dozen footmen dressed in splendid liveries, while as many more were in attendance in the grand hall.

"Sweet music from the garden just reached the ear, while the perfume of orange-blossoms floated upon the air. The interior of the mansion was brilliantly lighted, and numerous singing-birds, supposing it to be daylight, were twittering away as if their little hearts were perfectly happy.

"All that money could purchase, or good taste supply, was found in the grand salons of the mansion. I can not describe it all—in fact, I hate to think of it, for it was through the enchantments of this fairy realm that much of my life was embittered, and I would like to drive the memory of the place from my mind. I have a deep abiding feeling of revenge toward those who lived in it, and whom in time I hope to punish as they deserve.

"When I entered the reception-room with the count, the marchioness was reclining upon an ottoman covered with cream-colored damask. She looked very beautiful, and was surrounded by several distinguished-looking gentlemen, who were doing their best to make themselves agreeable. As I entered the door I noticed that

her eye brightened as she turned toward the count and myself, to the neglect of her devotees.

"The count approached, rather too obsequiously, as I thought, for a gentleman whose position in society was so well assured, and presented me, who followed rather timidly in the rear, for I had not been used to such splendor. Although I had conversed with grand ladies at the circus, I had never before been in a presence such as this.

"The count introduced me, saying, 'Madame la Marquise, permit me to introduce to you my esteemed friend, the Chevalier le Preux, whom I hope you will find a *preux chevalier*.'

"'Welcome to my house, sir,' said she, giving me the tips of her fingers. 'I am glad to welcome any friend of the Count of Montebello, although I shall be glad to welcome you on your own account.' As she passed me to speak to the count, I heard her say, softly, 'What a magnificent-looking man!' which I now know was intended for me to hear.

"The marchioness then resumed her seat, and insisted on my taking a position on her right hand. She took pains to render herself very agreeable to me, to the astonishment of the young Parisians, who remembered seeing me at the circus, and who could not but be struck with the *gaucherie* that affected my whole manner. They stood apart, evidently comparing notes about me, while the marchioness, not regarding their movements, seemed anxious that I should feel at ease.

"Beautiful though the marchioness was, there was something in the glitter of her eye that repelled me."

Myra's hand closed on Robert's at this remark.

"She was a dark beauty," he continued, "with black hair. Her dress ornaments and the fittings of the room were all made to harmonize with the marchioness's complexion. Her dress was a rich corn-color, trimmed with black lace, and she looked more like a Spanish beauty than a Frenchwoman. Her manners were certainly most agreeable, despite little peculiarities that I noticed in her smile and general expression of face.

"Few people came that evening, considering the style in which the house was illuminated. They seemed to be distinguished people, to whom the marchioness devoted herself with all the grace practiced in the highest social circles of Paris.

"There was no dancing, but refreshments were served in one of the apartments, of which the guests partook as it suited them.

"I have often, Myra, since that time, drawn comparisons between that assemblage and the many I have attended in this country, where you are wedged up in a crowd so dense that you can't turn around, and where the party-givers seem to be possessed with the idea of entertaining as many people as they can squeeze into their house and making them enjoy themselves, while the guests generally are abusing their entertainers and wondering how *they* came to give a party!

"The French are considered a frivolous people; but Paris is the school of good manners, and Parisians the only ones that know how to entertain.

"When the guests were taking their departure, the Count of Montebello whispered to me to remain till the last, that we might have a few words with the marchioness alone.

"When the rest of the company had departed and we approached to take leave, the hostess took me kindly by the hand, and her dark eyes glittered with that peculiar expression I have already mentioned, as she said, 'Do come again; come often. It is so refreshing to meet a man like you, who has seen the world and can talk of something besides the cafés and clubs of Paris. I am bored with all subjects of this kind.' I blushed, and, promising to repeat my visit, took my leave.

"The count laughed when we got into the carriage, which was waiting for us. 'By George, *Le Preux*,' said he, 'you are in luck. She never said that much to any one before. If it were known it would compromise her.'

"'I shall never mention it,' said I. 'Nor I,' said the count, and we drove home without further conversation.

"Early next morning the count called at my lodgings, and found me dressing. 'Here, my friend,' said he, 'is a note of invitation for you to breakfast with the marquise at half-past one to-day. *Corpo di Bacco!* but you are making rapid headway. It is those soft eyes of yours that have done the mischief; and, after all, our marquise has the weakness of human nature, and no wonder, when she is tied to an old catamaran like that husband of hers.'

"'Pshaw!' said I, 'don't talk nonsense. The marchioness is kindly disposed toward me—nothing more. She cares no more for me than for you.'

"'Make hay while the sun shines, my friend,' said the count. 'You may never have such another chance. I will call for you at one twenty.'

"When we repaired to the Hôtel de Cassarole, we found the marchioness charmingly dressed in white muslin, trimmed with lace, and looking cool as a spring morning. When breakfast was announced, we were ushered into a charming little room and seated at a small round table.

"There were no other guests than the count and myself. Everything was served in fine style, and the viands were seasoned by the lively wit of the hostess, who had no difficulty in entertaining two gentlemen.

"The breakfast was nearly over, when the door opened and an elderly gentleman appeared, standing as if uncertain whether or not he was welcome, when the marchioness jumped up and said, 'How fortunate! My dear husband, you are just in time for breakfast. I don't often have this pleasure.' Taking the gentleman by the hand, she led him forward, and said, 'My dear Charles, let me introduce you to the Count de Montebello and M. le Preux.'

"'I already have the pleasure of knowing the count,' said the marquis. 'M. le Preux, I am extremely happy to make your acquaintance. I am sure you are enjoying yourselves, for no one can be in the presence of the marquise without feeling the influence of her charming society.'

"'Ah, flatterer!' said the lady, 'you think every one looks at me with your eyes, and that your poor little Elene has wonderful merit. But I am neither more nor less than a good little wife, who does her best to entertain her husband's friends. But, my dear, come and sit by us, and enliven us with your agreeable conversation, for you know all things and have so much to talk about.'

"'Yes,' said the marquis, 'I know some things I wouldn't like to talk about. I will take a cup of coffee, nothing more; I slept badly last night.'

"I thought I detected a look of intelligence between the count and the marchioness; but it may have been only my imagination.

"The marquis sat down and drank his coffee, and, while drinking, kept up an animated conversation. He drew me out and made me tell him all the places I had visited; 'for,' said he, 'I am a Frenchman, and have never been out of France. I can not get good coffee except in Paris, and as for the wine they have in other places, it is execrable.'

"I told him of many things he had read about but never seen, but he was particularly pleased with the account of my method of

taming wild horses. 'Ah !' said he, 'I have one horse you couldn't tame. He would bite your head off. Oh, he is a devil ; but he takes sugar out of my wife's hand.'

"I noticed that all the marquis's conversation was addressed to me, and not to the count, a circumstance that did not seem to disturb the latter in the least.

"The Marquis of Cassarole was probably about sixty, although he looked older ; and the difference between the apparent age of himself and wife was striking.

"He was a gentleman in manner and conversation, but in all he said the cynic was continually peeping out. His maxim was : 'the nature of man is bad—the nature of woman is worse.' After conversing a while and sipping his coffee, the marquis politely took his leave, the marchioness kissing her husband's withered cheek.

"Then the count said that, unhappy as it made him, he must leave his charming hostess, as he had business that would not wait claiming his attention.

"But," said the marchioness, 'your friend will remain, for I have three weary hours to be alone before I put on my riding-toilet ?'

"Of course I was only too happy to stay, and the count departed.

"When he was gone the marchioness said, 'Now we will repair to my boudoir, where I admit my best friends only,' and she rang for a servant. 'Henri,' said she, 'I am not at home to any one.' We repaired to the boudoir, which was elegantly fitted up, and decorated with a profusion of flowers, while birds were singing as if enjoying their freedom in the woods. There was everything that was calculated to captivate the senses ; and I, who was unaccustomed to such beautiful surroundings, could not help being overcome by it all.

"Ah," said I, 'how beautiful all this is ! You must be very happy with so indulgent a husband.'

"Yes," replied the marchioness, 'happy in a certain sense, but everything palls upon me ; I have too much. It doesn't bring me the kind of happiness I want. I would give everything for two hours of your fresh conversation, your original ideas, and to hear you relate your travels, which you do so charmingly.'

"I can not find words to thank you, madame," I replied, and blushed like a girl.

"Ah, one can see," she said, 'you are not of Paris—you are so ingenuous ! Half the women in this city pay these compliments

without meaning them. They are the small talk of society, and generally signify nothing ; but I mean them seriously. You will never succeed in Paris until you are initiated into all the mysteries of refined society. If you are not on your guard, some one will take you in. You must have a monitor. Let me be the one,' and her eye softened as she looked at me with the kindness of a mother watching over me.

" ' Ah,' said I, ' I should be too happy to have such a monitor, for under such auspices I could hold my own in Paris.'

" ' And then,' said she, ' after I have fairly launched you on the sea of fame, you will desert me for some painted doll, of which there are plenty hereabouts.'

" ' Do I look like one of that kind ?' said I. ' I assure you, madame, that I only desire to live and die in your service. I know that I shall never find any one for whom I shall feel more respect than I do for you.'

" She laughed outright. ' This is delicious ! To think that I should be the one to discover such a pearl ; it would be thrown away on any one else. My dear child, you must never use the word respect in Paris, except as applied to a servant. Servants profess to respect us, their superiors, although they laugh at our foibles ; but the words love, friendship, admiration, and adoration are the ones used in polite society. You have much to learn, and I must see you every day to give you lessons in the usages of our polite society.'

" ' Oh, happiness unspeakable !' said I. ' I can never repay you, madame, for your kind interest in me.'

" ' You are a godsend to me,' replied the marchioness. ' I am tired of all the men in Paris ; they bore me to death. You are to me like a fresh new book, from whose pages I can gather original ideas. The more I read the more I am interested. You are to me a revelation, a dream, and I fear to awake and have it fleet away. Yet, with all your magnificence of form and feature, you are but a child to me in years and experience.'

" ' What could I say to all this flattery ? Nothing ; and I kept silent.

" ' Now,' said the marchioness, ' tell me your age and place of birth.'

" ' I don't know where I was born, madame,' said I. ' To be frank with you, I am a *chevalier d'industrie*, an adventurer. I am a waif that no one owns. I have no relatives on earth that I am aware

of, and no memory of anything concerning my infancy except a dear mother's sweet face and mild, affectionate eyes.'

"'So much the better,' she said. 'No one can claim you; you will suit my purposes better. I intend to take charge of your interests. And your age?'

"'I am not nineteen,' I replied, 'although I look older.'

"'Astonishing,' said the marchioness. 'With such a matured form and the limbs of a Hercules—I can hardly believe it,' and, rising, she twisted my curls in her beautiful fingers."

Myra gave a nervous twitch at this part of the story.

"'Poor child!' said the marchioness, 'you are three years younger than I am, and the difference in our ages will give me many privileges I could not otherwise have. I can have you as my cavalier, and can see you daily without exciting remark; for the world will say he is so young and the marchioness so irreproachable. I will take you into the best society.'

"She kept her word. For a week I breakfasted with her daily alone, and in the evening I with some other gentleman rode with her, for we were never alone together in public. At the end of the week I was perfectly infatuated with her.

"On the seventh day of my acquaintance with the marchioness the Count of Montebello called at my lodgings for me to take a stroll. We walked along the Boulevard des Italiens, when the count called my attention to a shop filled with curiosities, ancient arms, and all sorts of lumber. 'This fellow,' said the count, 'has the best collection of old arms in Paris, and perhaps in Europe. He has almost impoverished me by selling me antiquities at the most extortionate prices. I have a beautiful collection purchased from him; but I do not dare to go into his store now, for I can not resist buying an article if it strikes my fancy.'

"'You have never shown me your collection,' said I.

"'No,' he replied; 'I send all the arms to Italy, where they are put up on the walls of my house there. Look!' he said, suddenly; 'see that beautiful Malay creese. It's worth its weight in gold. It has been an heirloom in some great family. How did this old wretch of a dealer come by it? I say, Le Preux, go in and price it, and, if the rascal doesn't ask over a thousand francs, buy it for me. If I went in, the old man would persuade me to take it at two thousand. Here's the money. I'll walk on till you join me.'

"I did not hesitate to do as requested, and entered the shop, while the count walked on. I asked to look at the creese, which

was handed me by the shopkeeper, an old man with piercing gray eyes. On asking the price, he said five hundred francs.

"‘Too much,’ said I. ‘I know these trinkets well ; I have handled them often, and this is not an uncommon specimen.’

"‘Nonsense!’ said the dealer ; ‘the Count de Montebello would give me a thousand francs for this lovely article. Do you know the count? He is a connoisseur in these things.’

"‘No,’ said I, ‘and it isn’t likely I am as rich as he is.’

"‘The count is not rich,’ said the man, ‘and I have a great deal of trouble in getting my money from him. I have to make a discount on every bill I send him.’

"‘I thought this information peculiar, as it did not tally with what the count had told me ; but it was none of my business, so I paid the old fellow his price, and, taking the creese, was walking out of the shop, when the old man said, politely, ‘Will you please favor me with your name and address? When we sell valuable articles we like to know who the purchasers are.’

"‘No matter about my name,’ said I. ‘You have your money, and that’s all that is necessary.’

"‘Well,’ said the shopkeeper, ‘one can have little difficulty in finding you, for there are not many in Paris who resemble you.’

"‘I then joined the count and gave him the creese. We walked a little farther, and then parted to go to our respective quarters.

"‘When I got home I found a note from the marchioness inviting me to breakfast with her, as she was sad and wanted to be cheered up. Her dear marquis was quite sick, she wrote, and invisible to her even ; and her note ended with some flattering expressions of her interest in one so young.

"‘I had a vague feeling of distrust when I read the note ; and that night, when I went to bed, I saw the sweet face of my mother bending over me, her eyes filled with tears. I awoke, and could sleep no more. All the morning I felt uneasy—why, I could not tell—and did not get over this dread feeling until I had walked half a dozen miles around the city. Then I went home, dressed, and repaired to the Hôtel de Cassarole.

"‘I found the marchioness sad and weary ; but she soon became cheerful, and chatted on as usual. When breakfast was over, she led me to her boudoir, and gave orders to Henri that she was not at home to any one.

"‘Myra, I would give worlds if I had never seen that woman—if I had never gone to that breakfast ; for she threw a net around

me that bound every limb, and breathed words into my ear that dazed my senses.

"She gradually laid aside the mask of sisterly character and addressed me in words of passion. She lay in my arms, and I kissed those ripe lips until my senses quite forsook me."

At this Myra slowly withdrew her hand from his and sat upright. Robert did not notice the movement, but proceeded with his story.

"The marchioness persuaded me to come to her room that night, that we might enjoy ourselves without fear, and gave me a key with which to enter the garden-gate and the house. In an evil hour I consented, and then she hurried me away and would permit no further caresses. I imagined that I saw the steel glitter in her eyes as she bade me farewell, but I was so intoxicated with passion that I could not reason with myself. I had drunk more wine than was usual, and when I got home I threw myself upon my bed and fell into a deep sleep.

"Eleven o'clock was the hour that I was to be at the mansion. I was to enter the garden-gate and follow the portico around until I came to a door, which I was to pass through, then cross a chamber which would lead to another room, where I would find the marchioness waiting for me.

"At the appointed hour I was at the garden-gate, but my hand trembled so that I could hardly put the key in the lock. It was the first time in my life that I had trembled. I had faced every danger; was always ready to undertake anything: why, then, did I tremble then? It was because I was entering a man's house like a thief to commit the worst of crimes.

"I had never wronged any one before; now I was about to injure a poor old man who had treated me with kindness, and who had lavished millions upon the wife who was now about to betray him.

"But my reason had fled. I could only see that beautiful woman who had given up everything to meet me clandestinely. What greater insult could I offer her than not to go to the appointed place? Reason said, 'It is a crime she wants you to commit—flee from crime.' Passion said, 'Poor fool! another soon will fill your place, and the woman who now loves you will become your bitter enemy.' Conscience said, 'You will dishonor an old man's gray hairs.' Passion said, 'How dared he even permit a young and beautiful woman to be tied to him through his years of decrepitude when she is in the bloom of youth? Is it not an honor to

be loved by such a woman ? Does not she make all the sacrifice ? What do I lose ? I will meet her, and sacrifice all doubts in the happiness awaiting me.'

"Passion conquered, and Reason and Conscience went away, weeping sorrowfully over one who had thrown aside their counsels to embark in crime.

"On I went, following the directions I had received. I had passed into the house. A light shining through a nearly closed door piloted me, like the light-house, I thought, that had so often shown me the way into port. On the contrary, it was the *ignis fatuus* leading me to destruction.

"I opened the door and looked in. A single light was burning behind the rich hangings of a couch. The room was the embodiment of luxury. 'All this for me,' said I to myself, 'and I to hesitate ! The marchioness awaits me behind those curtains.'

"I stood beside the couch—oh, horror !—was it not a hideous dream ? No, it was the horrible reality I had to face. There was no marchioness with ripe lips and passionate eyes waiting to embrace me, but the dead body of her murdered husband, with wide-staring eyes, that I saw before me. But—horror of horrors !—the creese that I had purchased the day before was sticking in the old man's heart !

"I said to myself, 'This is death to me if I am caught here,' and I turned to fly from the spot ; but the door through which I had entered the room was fastened.

"The other door was unlocked, and I hurried through it into a wide hall and passed rapidly on, seeking an outlet to the street. I ran against a servant half asleep, who exclaimed, 'Pardon me, M. le Preux,' for he knew me. Further on I ran against another. My weight threw him down, and his fall aroused two of his comrades who were dozing. They all recognized me, for it was light enough in the hall for them to do so.

"The porter rushed to open the door, but I pushed him aside and darted down the steps. I heard the fellow say, 'Bless me, he is crazy !' But, not heeding the remark, on I rushed, running against people in the streets, who swore at me for a clumsy fellow. Finally I reached my lodgings and flung myself exhausted upon a sofa.

"I had lost my head entirely, and it was some time before I could recall what had happened. Looking in the glass, I was shocked at my own appearance—my face as white as marble and my

eyes starting from my head. My nose was bleeding from the exertions I had made.

"My coolness soon began to return, and a glass of brandy soothed my shattered nerves. I, who had never before known what it was to have nerves, to be so shattered at the sight of a dead body! But those dreadful staring eyes, the dropped jaw and protruding tongue of the dead man, were still before me, and I could not drive away the sight. I raised the windows, for, though the night was cool, I was suffocating for the want of fresh air. I could look upon the streets of the great city with its myriad lights and people hurrying hither and yon. I wondered if any knew of the tragedy at the Hôtel Cassarole.

"I thought I had made a mistake and got into the wrong room, and fancied how horror-struck the marchioness would be when she heard of the murder in the morning. Was it not my duty to have announced the fact and helped to ascertain who the murderer was?

"Instead of that, I was seen rushing away from the dead man's room. What excuse could I give for being there?

"‘Perhaps I shall be suspected of the murder,’ I thought, and I stood aghast at the thought.

"Then my danger rose before me in its hideousness. I could see the servants testifying to my strange behavior; the porter at my door would give evidence of my hurried exit from the house. Then the man who sold the creese would testify to my buying it, and my refusal to give my name. And who would believe me if I said I bought the creese for the Count of Montebello? And how came the creese there? The count must have been connected in some way with the murder, and yet what object had he? He was a nobleman, and already had the *entrée* into the Hôtel de Cassarole.

"‘And then,’ thought I, ‘what will the marchioness think of me—the murderer—whom she was expecting to meet—to find I had stopped on the way and killed her husband—perhaps attracted by his gold?’

"‘God in heaven, have mercy on me!’ I exclaimed, ‘or I am lost.’ I paced my apartment like a maniac until my eyes rested on the water in the hand-basin, and a handkerchief lying beside it, bloody from the discharges from my nose. My blood almost froze in my veins to think that any one entering the room would see these evidences of guilt!

"But let me breathe a few moments ere I go on."

CHAPTER XII.

ROBERT LE DIABLE CONTINUES HIS STORY.

"IN the midst of my dismay," resumed Robert, "three *gens d'armes*, accompanied by the *procureur du roi* and his secretary, entered my room. I was thunderstruck and could not speak. No explanations were asked. I was seized and, without a word, placed in irons. I burst into tears and sobbed like a child, but in a few moments my speech came back to me.

"'I am innocent of this murder, although appearances are against me,' I exclaimed.

"'Who hinted there was a murder?' said the *procureur du roi*, sharply. 'I would advise you, young man, to be cautious and say nothing. I detain you now to secure your person until the arrival of the prefect of police. The Marquis de Cassarole was found murdered to-night in his bed, and you were seen in the house under very suspicious circumstances. If you have any explanations, make them when you are brought before the *juge d'instruction*.'

"Just then the prefect arrived, and, having received the report of the *procureur*, he commenced investigating the room, a clerk writing down the proceedings as he went along.

"The prefect's attention was first attracted by the basin and bloody handkerchief. 'A bungler!' he said, aside.

"'I can account for that,' said I. 'My nose has been bleeding, and I washed my face.'

"'Perhaps,' he said. 'Give me all your keys.' He then examined everything in the room. In the drawer of my dressing-table he found the scabbard of a creese. 'This corresponds,' said he, 'to the weapon found in the marquis's body; write that down.'

"When I saw this evidence against me the perspiration stood upon my forehead in great drops.

"On a further search they found behind a wardrobe a box of burglar's tools, containing boring-bits, steel saws, files, and, among other things, a magnetic needle for ascertaining the position of iron bolts inside a door. 'This is rather damaging evidence,' remarked the prefect.

"'I never saw these articles before,' I said to him, earnestly. I began to think I was dead, and that these things were happening in another world.

"In another drawer they found a bag of gold and a package containing five one-thousand-franc notes.

"Are these yours?" inquired the prefect.

"No," said I, "I never saw them before."

"In one of my boots they found a gold watch, with chain and seals, bearing the arms of the Cassarole family. 'How do you account for these?' said the prefect.

"I know nothing about them," I replied, quite indifferent to what they might find. I saw that I was lost, and determined to meet my fate like a man.

"A pocket-book partly consumed by fire was found in the grate, but still bearing the coat of arms of the murdered marquis.

"There was evidence enough against me to convict me a thousand times, and my blood froze in my veins. I could already see the executioner standing over me, the crowd of people exulting over my fate, and my body thrown into a felon's grave.

"I thanked God that I had no one to lament my fate—no relatives to disgrace—and I hoped that my sweet mother had long since descended to her grave, that she might not trace in Le Preux, the murderer, the child she once loved so well.

"If I have sinned in thought," I mused, "I have paid dearly for it. This murder has saved me from a crime, and I shall go to my grave innocent of having broken any of God's ordinances." The bitterest enemies I had in the world would, I thought, forgive me if they knew how I had suffered."

Myra clasped Robert's fingers with a feverish pressure.

"The prefect made every effort to obtain still further evidence against me: took up the carpet, sounded the walls and floor, but nothing more was found; and I was committed to prison.

"In the mean time the commissaire of police and the police surgeon had visited the Hôtel Cassarole. The surgeon found that the marquis had been struck by a powerful hand right through the heart, and that he must have died instantly. There was little or no blood visible, the hemorrhage being altogether internal. The servants' testimony showed that the marquis had been for some time ailing, and that on the night of his death he had retired to rest earlier than usual; that the marchioness had seen him and bade him good-night, and that Henri, the servant, had fastened all the windows and doors except the door by which he went out, and that after he left the room he heard the marquis lock and bolt that door. The marquis had with him two candles, one of which was lighted.

Henri further stated that at about eleven o'clock, when he was on duty in the main hall, M. le Preux hurried from the marquis's room, ran against him, and rushed out of the front door—all of which was corroborated by the other servants. Thinking it very strange, they went into the marquis's room and found him murdered.

"It was further ascertained that at eleven o'clock that night the marchioness was having a little supper in her apartments, at which five gentlemen were present, including the Count de Montebello; and that when the servants made the horrible discovery, they called out the Count de Montebello, who sent at once for the police authorities.

"The other four gentlemen testified that they had arrived at the house a little before eleven, and had just taken seats at the table when the Count de Montebello was called out; that the marchioness, following to see what had happened, fainted in the hall on hearing the news, and that she had been insensible nearly all the time since, under charge of her physician.

"The servant, Henri, also testified that the marquis's watch, a bag of gold, and some notes had been taken.

"All this evidence indicated me as the murderer, and I was not surprised that everybody believed me guilty.

"Then the detectives were set to work to find out how the robbery and murder were committed. The French detective is a creature by himself; there is none other on earth like him. His methods are peculiar, and he neglects not the smallest object that will afford him an item of information.

"The detectives commenced their work in the garden adjoining the Hôtel Cassarole. They found in the beds the impress of two different sets of shoes—one a gentleman's boot with high heels, the other a slipper without heels; and they found that the gardener's shoes were wholly unlike these impressions.

"Both sets of footprints were followed across the garden-beds to the door in the porch where I entered, and there they ended, a few dirt-marks only being found on the carpet. The door leading from the porch was closely examined, and it was found that a small boring-bit had been used over the iron bolt that fastened the door on the inside. After boring the hole the bolt had been shot, and, after turning the key with a pair of nippers, the murderer had entered.

"The door was found bolted and locked on the inside, and the hole filled with a composition so much resembling the wood of the door as to be invisible to ordinary eyes.

"The door leading to the marquis's room had been similarly dealt with, and had also been found locked and bolted on the inside ten minutes after I had rushed through the hall.

"The magnetic needle found in my room was clearly the instrument used by the murderer, and this fact told with fearful effect against me in the court-room.

"It was not discovered whose were the second set of footsteps, and how it was that the outside door was fastened on the inside, as a murderer would naturally leave that way for escape open.

"There was really no hope for me, and I had lost the courage which had hitherto been part of my nature. I could not explain why I was in the house that night, for to do so would compromise the marchioness. Besides, if I told the truth, who would believe me? I made up my mind to die, and not to make any disclosures.

"I was taken to the Prison of St. Pelasgie and locked up in a dark cell by myself. The jailer, as he put irons on my hands and feet, said, 'Well, M. Robert le Diable' (for all Paris knew me), 'I have seen you perform prodigies of strength, but these will, I think, hold you until the executioner calls for you.'

"'Do you think,' said I, 'that these fetters would hold me if I wanted to break them? Do you think the *gens d'armes* could have taken me if I had thought proper to have resisted them? No. I respect the law, and if you put on cobweb fetters I would wear them until the law removed them.'

"'Nonsense,' said the jailer, 'these fetters will hold you fast enough.'

"'Would you like me to show you my strength?' said I, desirous of impressing this man with my power, 'and will you promise me not to make use of it against me?'

"'Yes,' said he, 'I would like to see it, and won't mention it.'

"'Then put two pairs of handcuffs on my wrists, for these are only tin ones.' He did so, and with one twist I sent both pairs flying across the cell. Then, stooping and taking the chains attached to the fetters on my ankles in my hands, I broke them as if they were threads.

"'Robert le Diable is a good name for you,' said the jailer, 'but you mustn't try to escape.' He went out of the cell, and soon returned with four men, who loaded me with chains, which were secured to a large ring in the wall. 'There, my man,' said he, 'they will hold you.'

"I reproached the jailer for his treachery, but he merely shrugged his shoulders and said, 'You are Robert le Diable,' and, leaving me a supply of bread and water, he and his assistants departed.

"Next day the Count of Montebello got permission to see me alone. It was thought he could elicit something from me that would throw light on the murder, and perhaps discover who was my confederate, for the police were satisfied that two persons were concerned.

" 'My poor, dear friend !' said the count, on entering my cell, 'this is dreadful. Tell me how it all happened, for I am satisfied that you are innocent of this murder.'

" 'Thank God !' said I, 'that one person believes me innocent. I had no more to do with it than you.'

" 'Was it to meet the marchioness that you went into the house ?' said the count, and he looked at me with a penetrating glance. 'I know she loves you, and is more deeply grieved for your condition than for the death of her husband. She murmurs constantly, "Poor Le Preux !"'

" 'No,' said I. 'What put that into your head ? Even if it were so, I would die sooner than hint at such a thing.'

" 'Well said, my dear Le Preux,' said the count. 'Your secret is sacred with me. As a man of honor you could do no less, and such an imputation upon the character of the marchioness would bring down the anathemas of all Paris on your head. You would lose what sympathy there is for you, and I assure you there is a great deal.'

" 'Rest satisfied on that point,' said I. 'Hot pincers would not bring out anything from me derogatory to the marchioness. But, count, I do not understand how the Malay creese I purchased for you was found in the marquis's body.'

" 'Ah !' said the count, 'I do not understand it either. The creese was stolen from my room by some one who knew my habits and wanted to lay the blame on me, knowing I was intimate at the Hôtel Cassarole. But why they should have hit upon that plan I can not conceive, for I was with the marchioness and two gentlemen from the time she left the marquis's room until the murder was discovered. One doesn't like to be mixed up in such matters in any way, and I now ask you the favor not to mention purchasing the weapon for me. It will do you no good, and may give me annoyance. No one would believe you unless I corroborated what you said. And as I can prove that the creese was taken from my room,

the court would say you were trying to connect my name with the murder to clear yourself.'

"'But,' said I, 'am I to make no effort to save myself?'

"'Make no effort of that kind,' said the count. 'I am your friend, and will employ the best counsel for you, and the marchioness, who loves you and believes you innocent, will move heaven and earth in your behalf. The police will soon find the guilty man, or men rather, for there were two persons engaged in the affair, and all you have to do is to be prudent and reticent in regard to the matters of which I have spoken.'

"'I will die before I will compromise my friends,' said I, whereat the marquis rose and shook me warmly by my manacled hand.

"'Don't mind these ruffles,' he said. 'We will wreath your brow with flowers when your innocence is proclaimed;' and he left me to reflect upon my folly, and with strong doubts of the count's integrity.

"I now recalled to mind certain looks of intelligence that I had observed pass between the count and the marchioness, and I remembered that peculiar glitter of her gray eyes that made me shudder. I remembered that she would always find some excuse to follow the count out and have something to say to him, although she professed to me not to like him. There had been, I began to see, a perfect understanding between the two, but what could I do? I could not prove my suspicions; my only chance of salvation was not to excite their enmity.

"My old friend, the landlord of La Fame, was the only other person who ever came to see me in the way of friendship. When he came into my cell his eyes were filled with tears. He grasped me warmly by the hand and said, 'My boy, I know you are innocent, though appearances are against you. Such a deed is contrary to your nature. You did not care for money, and had no debts.'

"'Thank you, old friend,' I replied, 'for your good opinion. I swear to you that I am as innocent as you are of this crime, but I can never make my innocence manifest. I shall either be executed or sent to the galleys for life. Death is preferable to the latter. You can do me but one favor. The prefect of police has in his hands some money and effects belonging to me. Have a power of attorney made out to take possession of everything of mine. Pay my landlord for my room up to the end of the month, according to

my agreement, and when I am dead see that I have decent burial. If I ever get free I will claim my clothes, but keep everything else to remember me by.'

"The old man wept. 'I will do as you request,' said he, and the keeper announced that the allotted time for visitors had expired. We parted to meet no more, but I signed the power of attorney, and the old man carefully preserved my effects.

"When my case came before the *juge d'instruction*, all the witnesses were examined and the most minute circumstances inquired into. I found that a French court is a very different affair from an English or an American tribunal. In France everything is done to accumulate evidence against the accused, and he is expected to prove himself innocent or be condemned. The office of *procureur de roi* is a court; that of prefect of police is a court; the office of *juge d'instruction* is a grand-jury and court; and then comes the Court of Assize, which winds up the business, as from it there is practically no appeal.

"After all the evidence was taken before the *juge d'instruction* I was called upon by that functionary, in the most compassionate tone, to admit the crime and name my accomplices, so that justice would be appeased. The judge kindly informed me that it would go much harder with me unless I made a confession, and that by not informing on my confederate I was letting a villain run loose upon society who would perhaps commit still greater crimes, and I would be *particeps criminis* in all he did, as if my own sins were not enough without burdening me with the sins of others.

"'But,' said I to the judge, 'I have committed no crime and have no confederate. I could make statements, but they would not be believed.'

"'Speak,' said the judge, 'and clear yourself if you can. You are too young to die without an effort to save yourself.'

"'My life is dear to me,' I said, 'but my honor is dearer, and I would rather die than violate it!'

"The people in the court applauded this sentiment, but the judge sternly admonished them to be quiet. 'We are dealing,' said he, 'with stern facts, and if this man is concealing anything from the court calculated to defeat the ends of justice, he is committing a great crime. His ideas of honor should yield to the demands of the law.'

"At this moment a man rose to his feet in the farther end of the room. It was the Count of Montebello. He looked sternly at

me, and the words 'Be careful' came to my ears. The judge looked around at the sound, as did many others, but no one noticed it further.

"I remembered too well the conversation I last had with the count, and trembled for fear that I had made a bitter enemy; so I answered the judge firmly, 'I may be wrong; that rests with my conscience. But I prefer not to give evidence that will compromise any one unless certain of what I am saying. I only insist that I am innocent of this crime. I have no more to say.'

"Turning, I saw the count leaving the court-room, his face radiant, and, catching my eye, he smiled kindly upon me.

"The judge then said, 'Prisoner, your case has been carefully investigated, and you have been given the opportunity of explaining to the court any of the circumstances connected with it. You have declined to defend yourself, and the court believes you to be guilty of the crime with which you are charged. You stand committed to appear in twenty days' time before the Court of Assize.'

"Thus ended my examination before the *juge d'instruction*. It was equivalent to a condemnation.

"I can not tell you, Myra, with what feelings I went back to my dreadful cell again, to be chained to the wall like a wild beast, and the horrid twenty days I spent anticipating my final trial. I longed for the time to come that my sufferings might be ended. Life might be desirable under different circumstances, but I did not care to possess it pent up with darkness and rats, for the latter came out of their holes at intervals to partake of my prison fare. The face of the brutal keeper was a treat to me when he came twice a day to bring my food and examine my fastenings.

"The day before I was to appear at the Court of Assize a ray of hope dawned upon me. As I ate my bread a small note dropped upon the floor in the writing of the Count of Montebello. I could hardly read it for excitement, but at length, by the dim light which straggled into my cell, I read as follows:

"'Be cheerful. The countess will testify in your favor to-morrow, and her evidence will acquit you.'

"That night I slept soundly, and, when called upon to appear before the court next morning, I was in better spirits than I had been before since my arrest.

"Let me hurry over the proceedings of the assize court. It was almost a repetition of the investigation by the *juge d'instruction*. The evidence as to my criminality was overwhelming, but I still

kept up a bold front, expecting to be exonerated when the marchioness gave her testimony. I could not imagine what it was to be, but woman's love I thought would find a way to clear me.

"At length the marchioness appeared, supported by her father and the Count of Montebello, and I could see that she trembled violently. I had been told by the keeper that she had been ill in bed ever since the murder.

"The marchioness took her place in the witness-chair, but on the first question she went into the most terrible hysterics. It was found necessary to remove her to her house, where the prefect said he would send and have her testimony taken.

"‘Never mind,’ said the judge, ‘her testimony will not be important. The evidence is complete already.’

"My lawyer then addressed the court, saying his client expected that the marchioness's evidence would be very important to him. The judge replied, ‘Do not trifle with the court. It is not likely that any evidence that bereaved woman can give will help the accused. Not a single word has yet been said in his favor, and no more witnesses will be summoned. If the marchioness gives any evidence in behalf of the accused, he shall have the benefit of it.’

"My lawyer, who was a man of some ability, had hitherto not much to say except to demur to evidence or to the rulings of the court. In his mind he believed me guilty, and couldn't help telling me so. How easily I could have changed his opinion, and perhaps turned the current in my favor! But honor forbade.

"‘Not to consume the time of the court,’ said the judge, ‘and as another case comes on this afternoon, the prisoner will state all he knows of his crime and inform the court who were his confederates.’

"‘I have nothing to say,’ I answered, ‘except that I am entirely innocent, and that I rely upon the evidence of the marchioness to clear me.’

"‘Remember,’ said the judge, ‘that this is the last opportunity you will have to speak in your own defense. As things stand now, your case is hopeless.’

"The evidence of the marchioness was finally submitted to the court by a notary. She accused me of the murder of the marquis, declared that she had suspected me of the crime from the first, and affirmed that on the day before the murder I had asked her many questions in regard to the marquis's room, etc.

"I jumped up breathless with indignation. 'Let me speak,' I cried to the judge. 'I will expose this woman.'

" 'Too late,' said the judge; 'your chance is gone, and your malice deprives you of all sympathy. Captain of the guard, make the prisoner preserve order.' Two *gens d'armes* took their stand by me, and I was silent.

"I made no more attempts to speak, but buried my face in my hands and resigned myself to my fate.

"The jury was out but fifteen minutes, and returned a verdict of murder in the second degree. The lenity of the verdict was because the jury believed I had a confederate, who may have struck the fatal blow. A French jury is always disposed to consider any point favorable to a prisoner. Before I left the circus I had become a great favorite with the public; all the jury had seen me perform, and they gave me the benefit of the doubt.

"When the verdict was rendered the judge addressed me as follows:

" 'Prisoner, you have been convicted of a horrible crime after being allowed every indulgence to defend yourself. You have not offered a single particle of evidence in the way of a defense. You have borne the self-confident bearing of a man who thought his physical triumphs and popularity with the multitude, easily led away by show, would clear him before a jury of intelligent men. You have descended to the basest means to help you out of your dilemma, but, though the verdict is lenient, you have been found guilty. Your sentence is to serve in chains in the galleys for life, and may you repent of your sins.'

"I was not unmanned at this sentence, for I was too full of indignation. 'May you live to repent of this unjust sentence,' said I to the judge, 'and to find that the guilty ones are those who dwell in high places.' And with these words I walked firmly out of the court between my guards.

"All the papers of Paris, of course, had accounts of the trial and descriptions of the murderer, but, as I saw none of them, the articles did not annoy me.

"At the end of ten days orders came from the government that all those condemned to the galleys should be marched to Toulon to work on the hulks, a set of old vessels used for the confinement of convicts.

"Here was the end of my earthly hopes, for I could see no relief but in death, and how soon that came I did not care.

"The day after the order came we started for Toulon. There were forty convicts chained together two by two, a long chain running down the middle of the line and fastened to a locked chain around our waists.

"My companion in misery, with whom I was to eat, drink, and sleep as long as either of us lived, was a lively Frenchman sentenced for killing his wife—a deed he gloried in.

"‘We are comrades now, my boy,’ said he. ‘My name is Pierre Couteau. What is yours?’

"‘Mine is No. 36,’ said I. ‘I have no other from this until death.’

"Thus I was launched again upon the world, to be the companion of the most hardened wretches and to hold communion with all that was vile.

"One who should read my story, Myra, would scarcely believe it, but would imagine I had woven together a tissue of falsehoods. But truth is stranger than fiction; and events constantly take place in Paris more remarkable than those connected with myself. Few imagine how blind justice is in a country famous for its civilization; but justice in France too often means finding a victim to vindicate the majesty of the law and to show the world that, no matter how the perpetrators of crime may cover their tracks, in that country they are sure to be discovered."

As Robert proceeded with his tale Myra pressed close to his side, as if to shield him from harm, and when he told her how he was chained to the brutal murderer, she clasped his hand in hers, and, dropping her head upon it, she sobbed like a child. "Ah!" said she, "why should you have been made to suffer so, and you so young?"

He let his hand remain passive in hers, and went on without noticing her words or actions.

"We were taken at night in vans to a distance of twenty miles from Paris, and were then told to get out and walk the rest of the way. French convicts are self-sustaining, and all that is known of the galley-slaves is that they are working, under the hot sun of August or the cold blasts of December, to expiate the offenses for which they were convicted.

"No question is asked about any one that has been sent to the galleys. Some of my companions were sentenced for ten, some for twenty or thirty years, others for life. How the poor fellows with the shorter terms counted every day that passed! ‘I have only

nineteen years and three hundred and sixty-two days to serve,' said Pierre Couteau, 'and you?' 'I am for life,' said I, coldly.

"'I am sorry for you, my boy; you are so young and strong. I shall be fifty-two when I get out, if I don't escape sooner.'

"'Escape!' I said. 'Who could escape with all those muskets pointing at him? The guards would be glad of a chance to put a ball into any one that should try it.'

"'Who knows?' said Couteau. 'This is my second term. I served three years before, and escaped at the end of that time. What won't a brave heart accomplish? With such a stout fellow as you at my side, and with such blows as the one you gave that old marquis—why, you alone could whip a dozen guards.'

"'Silence!' said I, 'I am innocent. I never shed blood in my life.'

"'Ha! ha!' laughed Pierre Couteau, 'that's the old story. The young man who was chained to me last year told me the same thing; yet, when better acquainted, he confessed that he had stabbed a girl in a fit of jealousy. I honored him for his pluck.'

"'Gracious heaven!' said I to myself, 'am I to be tied for twenty years to a brute that glories in murder?'

"It was some relief to get out of the van and have the chance of walking once more, although we had the weight of our heavy chains to carry, and our guards were ready to use their whips on the slightest provocation.

"I had been so long confined that my limbs had become swollen, yet, though I could not have liberty, I could enjoy the fresh air, and the green fields we were now passing.

"The swallow, as he darted toward our line and then sailed off in search of food, made me long for my freedom; but the glitter of his wings and his merry chirp made my heart feel glad. It was so much better than the companionship of rats in a dark cell. Happiness, thought I, is but comparative, and no doubt many a home that we are passing holds hearts heavier than mine. Every palace has its skeleton-closet.

"We were many days on the road, making soldiers' marches. Our guards went through the same fatigue, but they had not the heavy chains to carry. Their limbs were free, and they could choose their companions.

"On the third day of the march my companion, No. 21, said to me, 'When two convicts are chained together, one always commands

the other's services. I intend to command, as you are but a boy ; you will serve your father in serving me.'

" 'Never !' said I.

" 'Then,' said he, 'I will starve you ; you shall have no bread until you submit, and if you report me to the guard I will make your life a hell to you by ways you know not of. The guard shall lash you fifty times a day.'

" 'With that he grabbed my allowance of bread, for we were then sitting by the roadside eating our evening meal.

" 'Give me that bread,' said I, 'or I will punish you.'

" 'Pshaw !' said he, 'I like that—a boy like you to talk that way ! Why, I weigh two hundred and twenty pounds ; and look at my arm.'

" 'I seized his arm and leg and brought them together so suddenly that he had no time to think. I held him as if in a vise. 'I give it up,' said Pierre Couteau ; 'you are a mastodon ! I will serve you, and I believe you will be a good comrade.'

" 'Yes,' said I, 'but don't attempt to impose on me, for you have no idea of my strength.'

" 'Yes, I have, my mastodon ; I want no further proof of it.' This was our only difficulty. It was to our interest to be friends. Pierre's conversation was reckless and brutal, and his companionship was disgusting, but I bore with him as well as I could, for it was useless to complain.

" 'When we arrived at Toulon we were marched to the dock-yard and rowed to the hulks by a set of convicts worse-looking than ourselves. Our convict clothing was new, and our shoes still held together ; the others had no shoes. Our faces were comparatively fair ; theirs were burned blacker than those of Indians, and their feet were as hard as those of a camel.

" 'I shall never forget how those wretches jeered and laughed at us, calling us Paris swells. There was a good deal of French wit in their remarks, in spite of its vulgarity.

" 'Oh, God !' said I aloud, 'I wonder if I shall ever become like these.'

" 'No,' said Pierre, 'we shall escape before that time. These are third-termers, and ready for the devil to roast.'

" 'Our long chain was here taken off and fetters were riveted on our ankles and triced up by small chains fastened to the waist-chain, and we were put in a long iron cage on the deck of a hulk, with port-holes grated with heavy bars. Each of us received a

coarse blanket and a meal of bread and soup. Then we went to sleep and rested until gun-fire next morning.

"Soon after daylight we were landed, and had to carry heavy stone from one point to another in the dock-yard.

"No. 21 said to me, 'We must make a good reputation at the start. Most of these fellows get ill-treated because they are lazy and troublesome. Let us astonish the guards. My strength and yours combined is equal to at least five ordinary men, so let us commence with the largest stones. If we get into the good graces of the guards, they will trust us better and give us greater indulgences, and this will enable us to escape sooner.'

"Pierre was always talking of escaping, but I had little idea of release from my captivity except by death.

"The government was building a quay-wall of granite, the blocks for which were hauled on skids to the place where they were required. It usually took a dozen convicts to haul a stone of three hundred pounds weight. 'Here is one,' said I, 'of five hundred pounds weight' (all the stones were marked); 'let us commence with that.'

"'Mother of mercy!' cried Pierre, 'do you take me for an elephant?'

"'No,' I replied, 'but you are strong, and I will lift two thirds.'

"'Come on, then,' said he. And we bore the stone to the quay-wall. Such an unexampled piece of industry drew the attention of every one to us. The other convicts, who were hauling skids, dropped their ropes to look at us. The guards walked to the end of their beats to observe us better, and even the officers came out to see our performance.

"'Ah! Paris swells,' cried the convicts, 'you will soon tire of that amusement. Stick to the skids; it's healthier.' We did not heed their remarks, but worked on until the commandant ordered us to desist. Our reputation was made, and we did not forfeit it.

"I was two years in the convict gang of Toulon, and, although I underwent all the mental torture that can possibly be conceived, I never received a blow from a whip—which is more than can be said by convicts generally. I conformed to all the rules, was cheerful in manner, and had exhibited no desire to escape.

"'They are letting up on us two,' No. 21 remarked to me one day, 'and after a while we shall be trusted. Then, my boy, I'll show you how I can get away to America, where there are no hulks and no hanging for killing a wife.'

"There was a girl of about twelve years of age that was permitted to come into the dock-yard daily to sell cigars to the workmen. She was an interesting child and a general favorite, and often came near to No. 21 and myself, sometimes giving us a little tobacco or a piece of bread.

"One day, as my yokefellow and myself were sitting apart from the others on a large stone, she dropped her basket near us as if by accident, and the contents were scattered on the ground. While on her knees picking up her property she threw us two rolls of bread. 'Freedom!' she whispered, and moved on.

"'Take one,' said No. 21. 'No one will suspect you.' In obedience to this direction, I slipped one of them into the breast of my shirt.

"We passed on board the hulk at sunset, with the bread in our hands. No notice was taken of it by the examiners, who are appointed to search the convicts in case of suspicion. As soon as we could safely do so we broke open the bread, and found inside of each roll of bread a small file and steel saw. These we quickly concealed over a beam.

"I then altered my shirt, so that in the large seam of the back I could insert my two instruments; and No. 21 made a similar arrangement for the disposition of his tools.

"A month after this incident a vessel, bringing guns for the navy to Toulon, struck a rock off a point of land sheltering the bay and sunk. A large lighter filled with diving apparatus—windlasses, winches, etc.—was prepared to raise the guns, and two convict launches were detailed to tow the lighter out to the wreck and assist in raising the guns. No. 21 and I were among those detailed for this work, and we went to the task, with our saws and files safely concealed in the back of our shirts. At daylight the lighter started in tow of the launches. These launches were large, heavy boats, having twenty-six large oars each.

"When we reached the place of wreck the lighter was moored over the main hatch of the sunken vessel and secured head and stern so that she would not swing with the tide; and the two launches were hauled alongside of her, one on each side. Each launch had four guards with loaded muskets stationed in the stern-sheets to guard against a rising of the convicts, of which, however, there was little probability.

"We worked all that day, and recovered sixteen guns from the vessel. Ten more only remained. In the afternoon the com-

mandant of the dock-yard sent word for the work to proceed all night, as there were indications of rough weather, in which case the wreck would break up and make it difficult to recover the rest of the guns.

"Orders were given for our boat's crew to work from eight o'clock till midnight, the other from midnight till four o'clock, and so on till the guns were recovered.

"At about eight o'clock at night a cold, piercing rain set in. The guards stood it, wrapped in their great-coats, until nine o'clock, and then, considering that there was no danger of any one escaping, chained the launches to the lighter and went on board the latter to seek protection under a deck abaft the windlass.

"No. 21 and myself pulled the bow-oars of our launch, and our bow was on a line with the bow of the lighter. When it ran flood-tide, the current, which was very strong, ran from forward aft; when it ran ebb, the tide was from aft forward, the lighter being moored head and stern. The derricks and windlass were amidships, and the other boat lay sparred off.

"We worked all the first watch at the lifting apparatus, and were relieved at midnight by the other boat's crew. The guard saw us seated on our benches, or thwarts, where we were expected to sleep as well as we could. As the rain continued pouring in torrents, the guard soon withdrew again to the shelter of the lighter. The noise of the rain was so great that a man's voice could not be heard at a few feet distance.

"'Now is our time,' said I to No. 21, 'and we must be quick about it.'

"We had each one shackle on our legs to file through, besides a small chain that held the shackle up. We began to file at these rapidly, and finished the work in an hour, using great care. Each of our oars had a lanyard to it, which let it go down even with the water. We agreed to take an oar apiece, No. 21 to slip over the starboard, I over the larboard side.

"The tide was now running half ebb, and about two miles an hour. We dropped quietly into the water, cut our respective oars loose, and drifted away with the tide. The rain still fell in torrents, and a fresh breeze was blowing out of the harbor; but, as the line of ebb-tide passed close to the point, we calculated to reach it and not drift out to sea.

"No. 21 and myself kept together until after we lost sight of

the lighter's lanterns ; then we began to strike out for the point, which we were fast approaching.

"No. 21 said to me, 'That was my daughter that gave us the files. I told her before I left Paris to follow me.'

"'God bless her !' said L. 'Farewell, Pierre, until we meet again,' and I began to leave him.

"I was about one hundred yards ahead of him when I saw a light approaching from the direction of the harbor, and soon the hull and spars of a vessel loomed close to me. Her bow struck my oar, and I had just time to catch her chain bobstay, and was drawn along at a furious rate. I raised myself by main strength on to the bobstay, the foam of the vessel's bow coming up to my neck. 'Thank God !' I exclaimed, 'I am saved.'

"I now went to work to file off my waist-chain, which I did in the course of an hour, and was then free of all incumbrances.

"It was, as near as I could judge, three o'clock in the morning when I got rid of my irons. By this time the vessel had run at least sixteen miles. I intended to let her run until I was discovered, which would not probably be until seven o'clock ; 'then,' I argued, 'the ship will be at least sixty miles from Toulon, and will not turn back for the sake of delivering me up.' I was so exhausted, however, by cold and fatigue, that I found I must get on board the vessel if possible ; so I crawled in over the bow, and found the lookout fast asleep on his watch. There was a dim light forward, where the crew slept, and, looking down, I saw three men sound asleep in their berths.

"Nothing disturbs a sailor in his watch below, and I went down among the sleepers. I picked out the largest shirt and pair of pantaloons I could find and put them on ; I then put on a pair of shoes, a sou'wester, and an oil-skin coat, and, thus equipped, went on deck and threw my convict clothes overboard.

"As I came up from below the man at the bow said, 'Pepé, is it seven bells yet ?' 'No,' I replied. The lookout fell back under his tarpaulin and I moved aft cautiously.

"One man was leaning under the lee of the mainmast, one was at the helm, and two or three seemed to be asleep under the lee of the cuddy.

"I again went forward and tried the fore-hatch cover, and found I could lift it. Then I looked into the cook's caboose, and found there some hard bread and a piece of pork. The tea-kettle being on the galley ready for the morning breakfast, I took it along with

me, and descended with my plunder into the fore-hatch, hauled the cover over after me, and laid down on the cargo to sleep.

"Some time after I heard all hands called, and supposed it was half after seven. I congratulated myself that we were now at least seventy miles from Toulon, and that I would not be discovered for some time yet.

"I moved farther aft upon the cargo and breakfasted upon a part of my plunder. I remained in those close quarters for three days.

"And now, Myra," said Robert, pausing in his narrative, "you must be tired with this long story. After dinner I will tell you the rest. Of course, I have omitted many details, and must leave it to your imagination to fill them in."

"I am strangely interested," said Myra, "in all that you have told me. Oh, what misfortunes have followed you, and how bravely you have borne up against them! I hope you soon came to the end of your troubles."

"No, child," he replied, "only the beginning—but you shall know all. My life, I fear, is doomed to disappointments. I have not taken the right course to avoid them, but while I live you shall be my care. Now play something for me."

CHAPTER XIII.

ROBERT LE DIABLE CONCLUDES HIS STORY.

AFTER dinner Myra was anxious to have Robert continue the story of his life, and, taking his hand in hers, she led him to the parlor, where he resumed his narrative.

"At the end of the third day," said Robert, "a storm broke, which continued until morning. The night following, the hatches were left off, so as to prevent the cargo from heating, and I passed a more pleasant time than when everything was shut close, for the heat had been almost suffocating.

"After midnight, hearing no movement on deck, I put my head above the hatch to get more air. The vessel was nearly becalmed, moving at the rate of about a knot and a half an hour. Everybody was asleep except the man at the wheel, as is customary on board Mediterranean merchant-vessels.

"As there was no moon, I determined to risk going on deck. As near as I could judge, we were bound up the Mediterranean, perhaps to Malta, where, once on shore, I would be a free man. I could not consider myself free while on board a French vessel; for if the captain suspected me of being a convict he was bound to turn me over to the first French ship-of-war he met.

"Seeing a movement among the crew aft, I slipped below. I heard the steps of the men coming forward, and heard one of them say, 'I saw it standing right here, and it disappeared as if it went overboard.' 'I saw it too,' said another; 'it's a queer ghost that goes about stealing grub and clothes. I must tell the captain about it to-morrow.'

"'Ah!' thought I, 'I must be more careful.' The calm lasted two days more, and on the fourth day of our voyage the cook, coming down below for wood, detected me as I was lying on the cargo. He rushed on deck, and in less than a minute the rest of the crew were down to see who was there.

"'Come on deck and show yourself,' shouted the captain, and, finding it useless longer to attempt concealment, I came out.

"'There's my clothes,' said one; 'my sou'wester,' said another; 'my oil-skin coat,' said a third; 'and he's the man that took my kettle,' chimed in the cook.

"'Yes,' said I, 'I am the man—necessity knows no law.'

"'Where did you come from?' said the captain.

"'From Toulon,' I replied.

"'A convict by all that's holy!' exclaimed the captain. 'Seize him and tie him.' But the sailors did not seem anxious to obey. The big burly captain was the only one that appeared inclined to trouble me.

"'Look here, captain,' said I, 'I am no convict; only a poor sailor who wanted to see his mother in Malta. You will find me a good worker. I can hand, reef, and steer, and navigate into the bargain, and will help discharge cargo when we get into port.'

"The captain, finding his crew were not interested in delivering me up, at length said, 'Well, you will receive no wages, and will get a thrashing if you don't do your work well.' He was a brutal fellow, and used to frequently thrash his men, as I soon discovered.

"'All right,' said I, 'about the working part. As to the thrashing part, there are no four men on board this vessel that can do that.' The captain looked me all over, and, being, perhaps, of the

same opinion, walked away, the crew laughing at him in their sleeves.

"'Bully for you!' said the sailors. 'It's the first time old Beelzebub ever met his match.' Then they took me forward and gave me a hearty breakfast.

"I did all the hard work on board that polacca—kept everybody's lookout, steered nearly all the watches through, and was soon a universal favorite. Even the captain found no fault with me, although he eyed me in a surly manner that I did not like.

"We had rounded the Island of Sardinia, and Cape Bon was in sight. The wind was light, and it looked squally astern. It seems that the captain was intending to go into the Bay of Tunis, hoping to find a French ship-of-war there to which he could deliver me up, for he did not believe my story, and one of the men told me what he was going to do.

"At three o'clock the wind was very shifty and squally. All hands were sent aloft to reef topsails and furl light sails, the only persons on deck being the captain, the man at the wheel, and myself. Cape Bon was then about two miles off.

"I was hauling up the mainsail all by myself, when the squall struck the vessel. It was more than I could do to handle the sail, which was fluttering in the wind.

"'You infernal lazy convict!' cried the captain in a rage, 'get that sail in or I'll flog you. Take hold here with me,' and he took hold of the clew-garnet to haul upon it. 'Take hold at once, you lubber, or I'll brain you.'

"I deliberately folded my arms and said, 'I'll work for no man that treats his crew like dogs. Your sail may go to pieces for what I care.'

"'You are none of my crew, you vile convict,' he howled, and, rushing at me, he aimed a blow at my head which I warded off, and the next moment he was lying senseless upon the deck.

"The man at the wheel rushed to the captain's assistance, when I took him by the collar and tied his hands behind him. I then put the helm hard down, and the vessel flew up into the wind, throwing everything aback.

"There was a small dinghy hanging at the stern. It was but the work of a moment to lower her, and I was soon on my way to the shore, which was about a mile off.

"I knew the captain would not come to for some time, and

before the crew could get down from aloft I should be on shore in Africa, out of reach of French rule.

"Everything turned out as I expected. The wind being in my favor, I soon landed on the beach and hauled up my boat.

"I now strode up to the Plains of Carthage, and, looking seaward, the polacca seemed to be floundering about without any one to control her. The men were still aloft, trying to furl the sails, but the wind had increased to half a gale, and the vessel was too weak-handed for the men to handle the canvas without some one to guide her with the helm.

"I don't suppose the men on the yards even noticed the boat leave the polacca, and it looked to me as if the captain and the helmsman were still *hors de combat*. It was no business of mine, however, and I turned my face inland.

" 'Here,' thought I, 'am I standing on the site of the great city of Carthage, Rome's most formidable rival. For centuries it held the balance of power in the ancient world, which lost its most powerful counterpoise when Carthage fell.'

" 'But where,' I asked, 'are the remains of the great city that once stood so majestically upon this plain, whose soldiers gave the Romans more trouble than all their other adversaries put together, whose fleets carried terror all through the Mediterranean, and whose commerce covered the sea?'

"I could see nothing except a few mounds rising above the plain, and the remains of an aqueduct. I wandered on for several miles, until I came to some ruins of temples and tombs. Into one of the latter I descended, and found it a place where I could spend the night, and be secure from pursuit in case I was followed.

"A fire had lately been burning, and I found a broken crock partly filled with fresh water. I drank, and laid down to sleep.

"About daylight I was awakened by the noise of some animal rushing into the tomb and whining piteously. Looking up, I saw a young lioness, with a scarlet collar around her neck and part of a spear-handle sticking in her hip.

"I saw at once that it was a pet animal, perhaps the property of the Bey of Tunis, that had escaped and had been wounded by hunters.

"Going toward the lioness, I patted her on the head. She licked my hand. I then pulled the broken javelin from her side. It seemed to relieve the animal, which immediately commenced to lick the wound.

"I once more had a companion, and one that did not seem disposed to leave me.

"That evening I saw some Arab tents in the distance, and, as I was almost starving, I went toward them. I found a man tending a flock of sheep, and, making signs to him, he gave me a piece of meat, some black bread, and dates. I returned to the tomb and divided my meat with the lioness.

"That night the animal crawled quietly out of the tomb and disappeared, but in less than half an hour she returned with a lamb and laid it at my feet, licking the blood that came from its throat. So I was now provisioned for a siege.

"On the third day, about noon, I heard voices outside, and recognized that of the captain of the polacca. He had evidently gone into the goleta, anchored, and was now out hunting for me.

"'There are marks of blood on these steps,' said the captain. 'I'll go down and see what it means.' I stood close to the aperture, and as I did so the muzzle of a long musket protruded through the entrance, followed by the captain.

"I struck him a blow with my open hand. The gun went off, and he fell forward on his face. As he fell, the lioness struck him on the head with her paw. Then the animal uttered a frightful howl, and I heard the party outside scampering off. I looked out and saw three men running away, whom I recognized as belonging to the polacca.

"Finding this to be no longer a safe place, I stripped the captain's senseless body, put on his clothes, and went out of the tomb, followed by the lioness.

"I took the road to the beach, where some fishermen were hauling a seine, half a mile distant from the point where I struck it. Their boat was afloat near me, fastened by a rope to a stake. It was a fine fishing boat, with mast and sail up. I jumped into the boat without a moment's hesitation. The lioness followed, and we were soon going rapidly out of the bay, with a fresh wind.

"I was reduced to such straits to save my life that I never stopped to consider that I was depriving those poor people of the means of making a living. The hand of every man seemed to be against me, and I was hunted like a wild beast. Had those fishermen been notified that an escaped convict was concealed in the ruins of Carthage, they would have left their nets, even if full of fish, and joined in pursuit of me; such is the love of mankind for hunting each other down.

"In this respect man is more cruel than the brute creation. The latter hunt each other only when in want of food, and frequently display great courage in attacking animals of greater strength. But what courage is there in hunting a poor wretch escaping from a hideous bondage ?

"My conscience was soon quieted with regard to taking the boat. I carried on all sail, to lay as great a distance as possible between me and the goleta. I was the more induced to do this as I saw the polacca lying in port close to a French brig-of-war.

"No doubt the captain of the French brig had been informed of all the circumstances of my case, and would have sent his marines on shore to hunt for me amid the ruins of Carthage, but there were certain forms to be first gone through with. He had first to see the French consul-general, who must communicate with the prime minister, and then the prime minister must refer the matter to the bey—all proceedings that require much time and diplomacy in all Eastern countries, in this instance a fortunate circumstance for me.

"The last I saw of the fishermen they were hastening toward the goleta, three miles away, doubtless to procure another boat in order to pursue me. I calculated, however, that they could not start in pursuit in less than two hours, and by that time my sail would be out of sight below the horizon.

"At sundown I saw nothing in pursuit of me. I hoped by the morning to pass the south end of Sardinia and coast the shore of that island, so that, at a moment's notice of danger, I could beach the boat and take to the mountains, where I would be safe and be able in time to get on board some vessel bound to America, where I was determined to go if possible.

"On the afternoon of the second day a brig came in sight astern and rapidly gained on my boat. In four hours she was close alongside. She carried the American flag flying at the peak.

"A long, slab-sided Yankee, without coat or vest, sang out to me from the stern, 'Halloo ! Where yer bound ?'

"'I am in distress,' said I, 'and want to get aboard.'

"'Well, scoot her alongside and grab a rope, but don't miss it. My motto is never to stop for man or beast.'

"I sheered alongside, dropped the tiller, and made fast the rope to the forward thwart. Then a parley commenced. I invented a story, how my crew had run off with my vessel, had captured this fishing boat, put me and the lioness into it, and sailed away.

“‘Where are you bound?’ I asked.

“‘To Rio Janeiro,’ said the skipper.

“‘That will suit me exactly,’ I said. ‘My fellows are bound for Montevideo, and I’ll take the whole of them if I can find a French man-of-war in port.’

“‘French, eh?’ said the Yankee. ‘You speak tarnal good English for a frog-eater, but you don’t think I’m goin’ to take that critter aboard, do you?’ pointing to the lioness.

“‘Yes, I do,’ said I, as I clambered up the side; and Aysha, as I had named the lioness, after the Prophet’s wife, jumped on board after me.

“‘Well, here’s a kettle of fish,’ said the Yankee; ‘boardin’ an American vessel without permission! What’ll Congress say to that? There’ll be war with France in less than four months. But you are a whopper,’ he continued; ‘you’d do a lot of work, wouldn’t you? I am short-handed, and intended to stop at Gibraltar and git two more men. What kin you do? Perhaps I needn’t to stop.’

“‘I can hand, reef, and steer,’ said I, ‘and navigate, and can hoist out more cargo than any three men in your brig.’

“‘Then,’ said the captain, ‘I needn’t go into Gibraltar. Of course, you’ll work your passage, and pay for the animal’s feed when you get to Rio.’

“‘I’ll tell you what I’ll do,’ said I; ‘you can have my boat, sails and all, for the animal’s food—’

“‘And passage,’ said he. ‘Haul up the mainsail, back main-topsail, let go bowlines, ease off jib-sheet, down helm. I said that I never stopped for man or beast, but I do sometimes for a boat with a tarnal good sail in her. Get up yard and stay tackles. Here, kurnel’—speaking to me—‘you and I histe one end and the crew the other. I wanted a launch, and this’ll do until I can swap her off.’

“The boat was soon amidships, and we filled away again.

“The captain proceeded at once to business. ‘My mate is dead,’ he said. ‘My second mate can’t navigate; you can. If you’ll take mate’s berth, it’s yourn, provided you’ll do it on seaman’s wages. Yes or no?’

“‘Yes,’ I replied.

“‘Well,’ said he, ‘come and sign shippin’ articles, mess along er me, *et cetera*.’ I signed the papers, and was installed first officer of the brig Jasper, of Nantucket, Captain Abel Jewsharp.

"We ran out of the Straits of Gibraltar with a fine wind and steered for Madeira, where we stayed three days and took in a lot of wine for the Rio market. We were fifty-two days from the Straits to Rio, with fair winds and pleasant weather all the way.

"As we sailed into the beautiful harbor of Rio Janeiro, with its glorious mountains and broad sheet of water, my eyes were delighted with the sight of two American frigates, the *Constitution* and the *Java*. I felt that I was now under the protecting folds of the American flag, and that no one would dare molest me. But how little I knew of these things!

"As soon as we anchored, the captain went on shore to take his papers to the consul. During his absence the captain of an American brig, the *Belle*, came on board to see if he could purchase any wine. He told me he should sail next day for New York, and I engaged to go with him as mate.

"When Captain Jewsharp returned on board I informed him of the arrangement I had made with the captain of the *Belle*.

"'What in thunder will I do?' said Captain Jewsharp. 'Here hev I bin supportin' you and givin' you a free passage, and treatin' you like a lord, an' you desert me the first occasion that offers. That's as much as I could expect from a frog-eating Frenchman.'

"'That remark decides the matter,' said I. 'I'm not a Frenchman.'

"'Then you told me a tarnal lie,' he answered. 'Well, you may go. There's as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it. I'll git a mate that'll give you six an' beat you. Git out the wine while I go ashore,' and off he started.

"He returned in half an hour and told me to go on shore with him to the consul's and sign the necessary papers. When we reached the mole I noticed a dozen soldiers marching toward us. Two policemen suddenly stepped forward, seized me, and put on hand and foot irons.

"I was completely taken by surprise; but it would have been death to me to have resisted a file of soldiers with loaded muskets. I did not understand the matter at all, but still supposed I was going before the American consul.

"'How do you like that?' said Abel Jewsharp. 'It ain't the first time you've been in irons. You're the feller that escaped from Toulon when I was there. I knew yer by the mark on yer arm, which I saw yesterday when yer had yer sleeves rolled up. You'll

have to go back to the galleys, as they've an extradition treaty here with France.'

"I was too horrified to speak. I was conducted by my guard to the police department, and there I was arraigned, examined, and condemned, without evidence and without an opportunity of a hearing."

"O heavens!" exclaimed Myra, bursting into tears, "what a fate! and I was so happy thinking you would soon be in New York, under the American flag."

"The American flag!" said Robert, with contempt. "I saw an American midshipman, with cocked hat and dirk on, going down to his boat, and sang out to him, 'Tell your captain they are carrying to prison an American citizen who has committed no offense.' All I got for this was a shower of blows from the muskets of the soldiers."

"I believe some inquiry was made in the matter by the consul, but he was pleased to be satisfied with the police report that I was an escaped French convict, who had committed murder, and that my description had been sent to Rio by the French police authorities."

"My clothes were stripped off after I left the police court, and I was put into a convict's dress and heavily chained, for the report from France represented me as the most herculean and brutal of men."

"After being in prison about six hours only I was marched out and put with a gang of convicts, the worst-looking set of wretches that I ever laid eyes on."

"I was labeled No. 36, the number I bore at Toulon. My companion was an old man who wept all the time."

"We were bound for the diamond mines, two hundred miles distant from Rio. To tell you all the sufferings I endured marching under a tropical sun would be impossible. But I never let my captors see that I suffered, or exhibited the least impatience."

"I helped the poor old man by my side along as well as I could, but on the sixth day out he fell dead. After that I had no companion, but extra chains were put on me."

"We were fifteen days marching two hundred miles, and finally arrived at the diamond mines, worn out with fatigue. Five of our number died on the journey."

"The wretched-looking country to which we were taken beggars description. The sun poured down all day long, when it did

not rain, and the corral or pen we lived in was not even fit for beasts. But I can not give an account of all I suffered ; it would fill a book.

"I was here chained to a man who had worked in the mines six years, and had only one year to serve. Few that are sent to these mines live as long as that. Only think how men have to suffer in procuring the diamonds with which women adorn themselves ! They are not worth the blood and money they cost.

"My new companion turned out to be as agreeable a person as one could expect under the circumstances. He was an accomplished mineralogist, who had been sent to the mines for some political offense, and his conversation made the days pass less wearily.

"The officers and soldiers at the mines that guarded the convicts were all there for punishment. The only independent person was the government agent, who received a large salary, and dominated over everybody. It was not a happy community, and a man sentenced to the mines had better jump over the first precipice he comes to than to serve his term. A release seldom comes except by death.

"The man to whom I was chained had a retreat to which he resorted every day after labor was over. It was under the lee of a large rock shaded by trees. Here we sat in leisure moments day after day, the old man imparting to me varied and useful information. I always felt sorry when the guard ordered us into the corral.

"Three weeks after our acquaintance commenced the old mineralogist fell ill, and I attended him like a brother. He was still chained to me, but I did all the work, for which he was very grateful.

"On the third day of his illness we sat down, after we had returned from work, in our accustomed place under the shade of the rock. For a long time my companion was silent. At length he spoke :

" ' My young friend,' said he, ' I feel that I can not live long. I did hope to serve out my term and get away from here, but the government always imposes a term through which no man can live. You are of such strength that you may be able to endure it, and finally get away. I therefore desire that you shall benefit by my gains, for, although I have been closely watched, I have succeeded in accumulating great wealth. The ground we are now sitting on

contains all my findings that I have secreted from time to time. Three feet under the flat stone on which I am sitting are diamonds worth thousands of dollars. You need not attempt to secure any from the diggings. That would probably bring you under suspicion and get you in trouble. There is hardly a single convict here that has not at some time been detected in secreting valuable stones and been severely punished for it. Gain the confidence of the brutes in command, and they will not watch you closely. When I am dead, all this buried wealth is yours when you are liberated, as I trust you will be. Come here at the last moment and secure the diamonds. You will remember, I trust, the old man in the days of your prosperity, and breathe a sigh to his memory.'

"I pressed his hand, and nothing more was said. Three days later he died. I was truly grieved, and shed tears. The commandant was touched with my grief, and allowed me to bury my companion in a substantial coffin constructed by myself. As I had always conducted myself with propriety, I was not chained to any one after the old man's death.

"I worked hard in the mines and secured a great number of diamonds, and, what was unusual, never attempted to conceal any, which caused me to be trusted more and more. My life glided along then with less hardship, if not more pleasantly.

"One day, on my return from work, an English naval officer, who was visiting the mines, passed near me. I said suddenly to him, 'Will you please inform the United States consul at Rio that an American citizen is confined here for no crime, and that it is his duty to procure my release?'

"'Say you are an Englishman,' he replied, 'and I'll take you back with me. What a shame that these blackguards should keep a man like you at this kind of work! What a captain of a top you'd make! I'm up here with authority to take away any Britisher I may find who will serve in his Majesty's navy.'

"'Thank you, sir,' said I, 'but I am an American, and must come out of this as an American. Could you not mention me to the captain of the Constitution?'

"'Yes, I will,' he said; 'but better say you are an Englishman, and we'll have you out at once, or knock Rio down with our guns.'

"I thanked the officer again, and he walked away.

"Three weeks after that an order came for my liberation. As

no order had been sent from France for my extradition, the authorities at Rio were glad to get out of trouble for taking an American citizen out of an American vessel. The commandant was directed to treat me with consideration. My clothes were sent to me, and once more I was a free man. I was even given a room in the barracks while I remained at the mines, which, of course, was not long.

"At night I visited the spot where the old mineralogist had concealed his treasure, and below the rock, as he had told me, I found eight large diamonds. I had no time to examine the stones, but concealed them about my person. As I was now exempt from search, I had little apprehension of further trouble.

"Eight days afterward I reported myself to the consul at Rio, who told me that a British officer had reported my condition to him, and spoken of the handsome manner in which I had behaved in refusing to be liberated except as an American. The British admiral told the consul if he didn't have me liberated he would demand me as a British subject; and, said he, 'if they don't give him up I'll send my marines up there to fetch him.' The American commodore also put in a demand, and, in consequence, I was free once more, privileged to go where I pleased.

"At Rio I locked the door of my room at the hotel and examined my diamonds. I had learned enough from the mineralogist to know their approximate value. The two larger I judged worth at least fifteen thousand dollars each, and the others from three to ten thousand apiece—in all, some seventy-five thousand dollars.

"I was overjoyed at my windfall, but I could not help thinking of the poor old man who had worked in vain for six long years to accumulate this wealth.

"I sewed all the stones in the lining of my coat, except the smallest one, which, the next day, I carried to a diamond-store and submitted to the proprietor's inspection.

"He offered me eighteen hundred dollars for it, which I concluded to accept. A day or two afterward I sailed for London in a fast-sailing British ship.

"To make a long story shorter, I sold all my stones in the rough, in London, for seventy-two thousand dollars. The dealer said they might be worth more, but he had to run some risk in the cutting.

"I was very anxious to get to America, and soon after took pas-

sage in a Liverpool packet, and, when I landed in New York, felt for the first time thoroughly secure from French tyranny.

"I had no sooner landed than I began the search for my pet lioness Aysha, for I knew that Captain Jewsharp would convert her into cash as soon as he reached New York.

"One day I entered a circus in the outskirts of the city. In one part of the tent were some cages of animals, and a lioness that had been lying down jumped up on seeing me and began to howl. I recognized Aysha at once, but so altered! She was all skin and bone, and her eyes had a fierce, lurid expression. I walked up to the cage, put my hand in, and Aysha licked it with joy.

"‘Stranger,’ said the keeper to me, ‘you are very rash. I wonder that animal didn’t tear your arm off. She’s the most devilish critter we have in the show.’

"‘Open the cage-door and let me go in,’ said I. ‘I will show you how easy it is to manage her.’

"‘Not for the world,’ said the keeper. ‘We never allow any one to go near her. She will turn on you before you know it, unless you have the power of controlling animals that I don’t possess.’ All this time Aysha was licking my hand through the bars of her cage.

"‘It beats all,’ said the keeper, ‘how that animal acts toward you. Here is the key, if you think you can go in without risking your life.’

"I went into the cage and sat down. Aysha crawled up to me and laid her head in my lap, testifying in every way her joy at seeing me. Then I opened the cage-door and Aysha followed me out, the keeper and all hands running away in terror. Presently, finding the animal was quiet and that it obeyed all my commands, the keeper came back.

"‘This lioness is my property,’ said I. ‘She was stolen from me. What will you take for her?’

"‘Nine hundred dollars,’ said the keeper, ‘is the price we paid for her to a ship-captain.’

"‘Yes,’ said I, ‘Abel Jewsharp, who stole her from me. Well, I will give you what you paid for her.’

"‘Take her,’ said the man; ‘she is no use to us. We can’t manage her, and you can.’ That’s the way I regained possession of Aysha.

"Soon after this incident I purchased this house. The rest you know. So now, my child, my story is ended. I have only to say that I am engaged in enterprises that will either make or break me.

I may be utterly ruined, and again thrown back by adversity into many of the horrors through which I have passed before.

"I forgot to mention that a year after I settled here I sent Walter to Paris with a letter to my old landlord of La Fame, with a request that he would send me all my effects. I told him how I had escaped, and that I was doing well and was happy. In reply I received a letter congratulating me, and giving me one piece of news that quite staggered me. It was that the Count of Montebello and the marchioness were married in less than a year after the murder of the marquis.

" 'My God !' I said, 'I see it all now.' I was the tool and the victim of these murderers. I determined to be revenged. I saw that from the very first the count had inveigled me into the meshes of the net, and how adroitly he had managed to fix the murder upon me. I remembered how those steel-gray eyes of the marchioness would glitter when she clasped my hand in hers in lover-like fashion, while she doubtless said to herself, 'O fool ! I am sacrificing you to the man I love, and your head shall fall by the axe, or your youth be spent in the hulks, while my love and I enjoy the fruition of our hopes far out of reach of your revenge.'

"There never was a case of murder where the perpetrators so completely succeeded in fixing the crime on another. Not a single doubt ever entered the mind of any one that the marchioness and count had anything to do with it. On the contrary, the marchioness had the sympathy of all Paris.

"The old landlord informed me that the world of fashion was somewhat shocked at a marriage made so suddenly, considering the grief exhibited by the widow at her husband's death ; but the marchioness gave a grand entertainment that eclipsed anything that had been seen before in the gay city. People applauded, and said : 'Ah, she is divine ! Her house will be even more charming than it was in the time of the marquis, who was, it must be confessed, an old dolt that did not appreciate his charming wife.'

"I wonder what Paris will say when I bring these murderers to the scaffold or to the galleys ! The Count of Montebello, no doubt, did the deed with his own hand, after the wife had stupefied her husband with drugs.

"I shall devote my life and fortune to bringing these two wretches to justice, but I can not return to Paris at present, nor have I yet sufficient money to carry out my plans. It is this

money I am working for now that causes me to lead a life of mystery. And I may fail in my object after all.

"From my earliest recollection, the world has been hard upon me. Where I have performed kind actions I have been rewarded with ingratitude; where I have given love I have encountered treachery in return. I have never had sympathy extended to me from any quarter. In my intercourse with the outside world I have found nothing but avarice and dishonesty, and among my most intimate acquaintances there is no one to whom I would trust my interests."

"Would you not trust me?" said Myra, raising her tearful eyes to his. "I would sacrifice my life for you."

"Of course, my child," said Robert, "I would trust you in every way. But you are not my outside world; you are my guardian angel, and when I am about to engage in what people might call unlawful acts I think of your innocent face, and the thought stays my hand."

"But, Myra, you may as well know the worst of me. My life is a reckless one. How could it be otherwise, considering the circumstances of my history? My hand is against the rich, that I may help the poor. If I perform a good action to-day, I mar it to-morrow by doing something not in consonance with the laws of society; and I help the poor with the gold I squeeze from the grip of the purse-proud money-maker. Although you have known me only as the benevolent Mr. Robert, who is always helping the oppressed, you must know me also as one who strips the rich to enable me to carry on my benevolence."

Myra looked at him wonderingly. "I do not understand," she said, "nor do I want to. I know no one so good as you, and I could not be made to believe that you would ever do anything that would bring a blush to your cheek."

"Perhaps not, Myra," he replied. "The cheek may be too hardened to blush; but, child, let me always have your affection, no matter what I may be," and Robert stooped and kissed her brow, over which the rich blood mantled as she felt the pressure of his lips.

"And now, Myra," he said, "I must to business, for I have much to do before I go away to-night. I have devoted many hours to giving you an outline of my life up to the time I arrived in New York. It is better you should not know all that has since occurred. If in the future you hear of acts at which your nature revolts, remember that I have much to forgive in the world, and

that it must pay the penalty for the cruelty it has practiced upon me.

"Now send Walter to me in the paneled room. I sent word to him to meet me here at this hour."

Myra arose and went to comply with Robert's request, her innocent face full of wonder at all she had heard.

Robert le Diable was waiting in the paneled room when a young man neatly dressed entered and bowed low.

"How are you, Walter?" said Robert, extending his hand, which the youth took respectfully.

"Well, thank you, sir. All your orders have been carried out."

"Sit down and tell me all," said Robert.

"You see, all this paneled work, sir, looks just as it did. I hired the man you told me of, and kept him here while he did the work, bringing him here blindfolded at night, and using the same precaution when he went away. I saw him on board the schooner bound for Porto Rico, and he signed a contract not to return for two years, I paying him one thousand dollars.

"Here, sir, are three closets apparently with shelves twenty-two inches deep and thirty inches wide. By touching this knob the closet will descend to the walled room below, which has no apparent outlet but the door of which you know. This square of floor near the window, set in so neatly no one could detect it, rises on touching a spring, and steps are revealed leading to the cellar. You see that one in this room has the choice of four different ways of leaving it. I have seen the captain of the schooner and given him your orders. Nimble is waiting below, sir, until you want to see him."

"All right," said Robert, "you have done well. Now, Walter, I want to inquire how your wooing with Myra progresses?"

"Ah, sir!" replied the young man, "very poorly. I fear Myra will never cast her eyes upon me in other than a sisterly fashion. When I speak to her of love it pains her, and she asks me to desist. I love her too much to make her feel uncomfortable."

"Well, patience, Walter," said Robert. "Rome was not built in a day. You may win in the end. If anything happens to me, you will be Myra's only protector. When I go away I confide her to your care. God knows if I shall ever return here. Remember, Walter, all that I have done for you, and try and return it by your care for Myra if anything happens to me."

"I shall never forget what you have done for me," said Wal-

ter. "How could I forget the time when I was arrested as a thief, and you gave bonds for me, secured me counsel, and not only cleared me of the charge, but fixed it upon the proper person? You have supported me and my poor sick mother ever since, and my life will always be at your service. Words, sir, can never express my thanks; but, independently of the duty I owe to you, I would die to serve Myra."

"Then," said Robert, "I shall feel comforted when I leave her. Myra may still come to look upon you in a different light, and she is a girl worth waiting for. Now send Nimble to me."

Presently an odd-looking lad with a queer old face appeared. The new-comer, who was dressed in a blue suit, was of so slight a figure that it seemed as if one could span his waist with his hand.

He knelt and kissed his master's hand. "I longed so to see you, Master Robert," he said. "I thought you'd never send for me."

"Everything in time, Nimble. But how gets on the schooling?"

"Well, sir," replied the boy, "I don't think even you would find fault with me. I stand head in all my classes, and that's saying a good deal for one that you picked up starving in the streets eighteen months ago, and who then scarcely knew how to read."

"Well, Nimble," said Robert, "I have sent for you to give you some instructions before I go away. In case you hear of my getting into trouble you must find me. I leave that to your instinct. Here in this little secret closet"—and he touched a knob in the panel, causing a door to fly open—"you will find a strong malleable wire with a bullet attached, so that it can be thrown up to a window. In this bundle is a tiny file and saw for cutting iron. When you find where I am, get these to me, and, if you receive a message from me, come wherever I am, and with several disguises. Remember what I have taught you from time to time, and be cautious how you proceed. Now, good-night."

"I understand," said the boy, who, knowing Robert le Diable's humor, left the room.

That evening Robert spent with Myra, but at eleven o'clock he said, "Now, my child, I must leave you, and may not see you for some time."

Myra burst into tears. Robert embraced her fondly, and left her weeping upon the sofa. As he passed Aysha, the lioness whined. He patted her head and went into the paneled room.

Here he armed himself with a double-barreled pistol and dirk-knife. Touching a spring in the panel, a door opened, and he was soon in the street.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MYSTERIOUS ASSEMBLY.

IN the center of a row of houses in Pine Street there stood an old brick building that had the appearance of being uninhabited. Cobwebs hung around the closed shutters, and the heavy hinges of the door were covered with rust. It did not look like a desirable house to rent. Next door to it was a smaller house of a little more modern appearance, but far from inviting. This place was kept as an eating-house by one Hans Hammel, a German, whose dingy sign appeared over the front door.

It was sundown. The street-lamps were not yet lighted, and the lamps in Hans Hammel's establishment were not very numerous nor very brilliant. The house looked as if it were ordinarily frequented by common wayfarers only, yet on the evening in question, which was the night following the one in which Robert le Diable left home, it appeared to be occupied by a good many people of different sexes.

As a person entered the house the burly proprietor would ask him, "Will you haf shops mit brod ant putter, or eks mit zhrimp? for dat's all ter ish. Effery potty likes dem zhrimp."

If the answer was "eks mit zhrimp," Hans Hammel would pass the speaker into the next room, where he would ascend a long, narrow stairway until he reached the room above, which contained five painted pine tables, the tableware and other furnishings being of the commonest description.

Only one guest at a time was admitted to this private parlor, and he or she was blindfolded by the waiter, led into a closet and placed face to the wall. The closet would then revolve on a pivot, and the occupant would presently find himself in another room, in company with others that had arrived before. This performance seemed to be understood by all, yet no one knew where he was, or how he got into the room.

A detective would hardly have discovered the contrivance, for

in appearance there was a closet on each side, containing a lot of bottles and other rubbish.

The room into which persons were thus introduced had all the shutters closed and was lighted by two dim oil-lamps. The women present wore thick veils, and the men had their faces covered. All were apparently strangers to each other and known only to the chief, who sat at a small table at the end of the room. Back of him were four other persons, also disguised.

The room, which was in the old house we have formerly mentioned, was once used for merchandise. It was some fifty feet long by thirty wide. At the lower end of the apartment were benches where persons entering could sit in obscurity, no one recognizing them.

The man at the table had a large nose, a red face, and a long, white beard. A pair of huge blue goggles added a little to his personal appearance. A dark gown, like that of a judge, covered him from head to foot. The four satellites in his rear were equipped in somewhat similar fashion.

At seven o'clock the chief of the society (for a society it evidently was) broke the silence. "Connect the bell and post the guard," said he. "Come forward, No. 6."

A woman of uncertain age advanced to the table. A thick curtain was dropped behind her, so that she was cut off entirely from the outside. "Speak," said the chief.

"Here are the house-keys," she said. "You can take impressions, and I can return them by nine o'clock. The silver is in the dining-room closet, top shelf. There are some bank-notes in the library-desk. There is no jewelry in the house, most of the family being away."

The keys were handed to the four men, who, after taking impressions in wax, returned them to the woman.

"What is the number of the house?" said the man with the white beard.

"No. 67 Bowling Green," said the woman.

"That will do," said the man. "There are your instructions," handing her a paper in cipher. "Now go home." She was then blindfolded behind a screen which hid the closet-door, and pivoted out. As she passed through the dining-room Hans Hammel inquired, "How you like dem zhrimp? All der gals likes dem." The woman made no reply, but disappeared through the door into the street.

"Come forward, No. 9," said the man in the white beard. A young man advanced to the table.

"Well, what news?" said the chief.

"A rope-ladder will be let down from the second story, back window, of Wiseman & Co.'s jewelry store at twelve o'clock to-morrow night. The man on watch will be drugged, and after ten o'clock will know nothing."

"All right," said the chief; "you have done well and may go." He made some notes with a pencil as the man was pivoted out.

When the man got down-stairs Hans Hammel asked him, "How you like dem zhrimp, vich effry potty likes?" The man went into the street without replying.

"No. 10," said the chief.

A girl of slight figure tripped up to the table. "I am sorry to tell your honor," said she, "that K. W. is under suspicion of taking Mrs. Ruggles's diamonds. His room has been shadowed by a new detective—a man of seventy, who understands his business. The K. W. had been away a week or so, they thought in the house. I cleaned up and dusted the room every day except the day after the robbery."

"Involuntary contribution, if you please," said the chief.

"I beg your honor's pardon," said the girl, "but the last night on which he came in with a night-key he smoked a cigar in the room and left the ashes on the mantel, which the detective saw and made a note of. He changed his collar and his boots, and the old man questioned me so closely that I became nervous, and he saw that I was trying to fool him. That afternoon I mailed a letter for the K. W., putting him on his guard. The same day the landlady hired another girl to help me with the work, but she is a fool, and I don't think the landlady suspects anything."

"That shows how easily you can be gulled," said the chief. "The landlady is in league with the detective, and the girl is there to shadow you. This is serious. I always knew that K. W. was a fool and would get us into trouble. Notify him not to hide, if there is no evidence against him, but go back to the house and put on a bold front. He got the diamonds, you say?"

"Yes, sir, them's all safe, and no one but me knows she had 'em, for she never wore 'em but once, and then I helped dress her."

"Well, go now," said the chief, "and shadow the new girl."

"La me!" said No. 10, "to think that there girl should be so artful when she looks as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth!"

And Jane Ross, *alias* No. 10, whisked off, to be saluted by Hans Hammel as she passed through the dining-room.

"No. 11," called out the chief, and a stout man of perhaps thirty-six years of age walked up.

"Well, sir," said he, "I have dug under the vault of the Hudson Bank and have cut away the floor until I can see the bottom of the strong box. It will be ready to crack at midnight day after to-morrow. I hired the house next door for a month at a hundred dollars rent."

"Cheap, if we get the swag in the vault. There ought to be at least a hundred thousand there," said the chief as he made a note. "How about the watchman inside?"

"He'll drink with me an hour before he goes on watch," said No. 11, "and an hour afterward will be so sound asleep that no ordinary noise will wake him."

"Well, good-night," said the chief. "They'll think that the Vandusen affair will keep us shady for a time, so we shan't be watched so closely. Good-night; be on time. Take No. 13 with you, and bring me the swag as soon as you secure it. Fill up the hole from the next house if you have time, so as to show as little trace of your work as possible." The man passed out.

"Ah! yer likes dose zhrimp?" said Hans. "I never see der man vot wasn't."

"No. 14," said the chief, and an old man walked to the table. "Well, watchman, what of the night?"

"Here, sir," said No. 14, "are the keys of the front and side doors of the house in Church Street. Mr. Carr gives a party three nights from now. I go on watch at twelve. The girl as tends the front door gave me the keys. She must have them by ten o'clock. Take the impressions and let me go. The silver's in an iron chest in the dining-room. They keep a small dog in the house."

"Bother the dog," interrupted the chief. "Tell the girl to give it this pill at nine o'clock. It will make him sleepy and stupid, so that he won't trouble us. What is your number?"

"No. 715 Battery," said the night-watchman, "and, your honor, there's no flour in the barrel and no molasses in the jug, and the young ones are piping. My row of houses only pays me fifteen dollars a month, and I can't live on that."

"Here's a month's pay for you," said the chief, "and you'll get more if we are successful. Good-night." And the watchman, like the rest, was pivoted off.

Mr. Hammel addressed him as he went out : " Ah ! dose zhrimp done makes yer sick, eh ? Vell, eat some more, an' dose zhrimp vill makes yer feel petter as goot ; effry potty, olt an' young, likes dem."

" Step up, No. 15," said the chief.

A respectable-looking old woman took her stand at the table.

" Well, Mrs. Marsh, I know you have good news for me."

" Hush, for God's sake ! Don't mention my name," said the old woman. " No. 15, if you please. Missus has just received a beautiful box of diamonds from Paris, price twenty thousand dollars ; I heard her say so ; but I'll have to drug the whole family to get them. Missus sleeps in the front room over the hall. The diamonds are in the top drawer of her bureau, No. 690 Broadway ; here's the front-door key." An impression of the key was taken and the old woman dismissed.

" Ah !" said Hans, " yer looks as if yer eats all dose zhrimp yerself ; effry potty loves dem zhrimp."

No. 20, a stout lad of sixteen, now came forward.

" Well, my plum," said the chief, " how do the cherries hang ?"

" Ripe, sir," answered the boy, " and ready to pick. I shall sleep in the broker's office five nights from this, and will drug myself at ten o'clock. You can enter then, as the door will be unlocked, with marks of pincers on the key. *You* must shoot the bolts. There is at least ten thousand dollars in the strong-box. I have two heavy horse-blankets ready for your men to work under. They must tie and gag me, but see that I'm left room to breathe. I'll give our watchman a bottle of whisky, and he'll be drunk and asleep before eleven o'clock."

" You are a trump," said the chief ; " nothing could be better planned."

" I will drive two small pins where the bolts are," said the boy, " so that your men will have no trouble in locating them."

" Good-night," said the chief ; but, as the boy hesitated and twisted his hat about in his hand, the chief handed him a five-dollar note.

" I wouldn't ask it, yer honor," said he, " but I promised the gals to take 'em to the theatre to-morrow night."

As he passed out old Hans said, " Oh ! little poy, I can see dose zhrimp stickin' out effry part off yer potty. You'll be sick ef yer eats too much off dem zhrimp."

" Come forward, 21 and 22," said the chief, and two respectable-looking girls went behind the screen.

"Well, girls, what good news have you?"

"You like to have got us into a mess, sticking your red wafer on the door," said one of them. "You mustn't do it again. Stick it on the next house, and we will see it. Old Sneaker swore it was a signal from our beans, and he wouldn't let us go out the whole evening. So we stayed in, and saw the head clerk put five thousand dollars in the cash-box. It will be too late to put it into the bank till Monday. So you must get it to-morrow night, or you may not get it at all. We stay there four nights in succession, and Eels, the shop-boy, stays there with us. He's awful fond of raspberry jam, and we have promised him some; and if you'll give us a powder to mix with the jam that will put him to sleep, you can come and go as you please. We'll unlock the door for you, and you'll have no trouble."

"All right, girls—the number?"

"No. 460 Grand Street. And now, sir, if you please, we'd like a little spending money; we only gets four dollars a month wages."

"There's ten apiece for you," said the chief, noting down something on paper. "Good-night, and don't squeak."

As the girls went through the dining-room, Hans, who was half asleep, yawned and said, "Ah! mine prittish gala, yer eats dose lovely zhrimp to-night mit a goot digestion. You look ash 'appy ash a chile mit der piece off merlasses canty."

So the proceedings went on until nearly eleven o'clock, when Nos. 41, 42, and 43 were called, and up stepped three strapping fellows.

"Ha, my artful dodgers!" said the chief, "you look kennish. What say you?"

"Well, sir," said the spokesman, "this has been a slow job, but we have surveyed the premises and hooked the fish. We have been doing work for Morton, the banker, for three days, strengthening the wall in the rear of his strong-box. We put in cement that won't harden for a long time, so we can pick out the stones when we want to. The head clerk sleeps in the bank with loaded pistols. We have arranged with him to let us get through the wall, but we are to iron and gag him. He assures us that there's nearly fifty thousand dollars in the vault, an impression of the key of which we got from the clerk, and had a brass one made. But wa are to see that the clerk gets ten thousand of the loan. How will that do, sir?"

"Pretty well, only ten thousand is too much. Half that

amount would have been enough. The clerk's salary is only a thousand a year, and he has no hope of advancement. He has served Morton eight years in the capacity of chief clerk, and is greatly trusted. 'What fools we mortals be.' A few hundred dollars a year added to his pay, and that man would have been honest. Morton could have well afforded to increase his salary, since he has made thousands for the bank. That's the way with rich people. They fairly suck the life-blood out of their dependents, who have families to provide for, and spend in one night the salary of three or four clerks in entertaining each other. Let them suffer. Take charge of the job, you three, and put it through."

Now that the women were all gone, there remained in the room ten men of different ages. They took the veils from their faces and stood revealed to each other.

The chief took out his notes and gave to each his allotted work, and said: "I want all those cribs cracked without fail. Now go, one after another, and don't let more than two be seen together in the street."

After these men had departed there were left only the chief and the four persons who sat behind him. The chief turned to them and said: "Cracking Morton's crib will make an awful stir, he is so powerful. He will spend fifty thousand dollars, if necessary, to find out who has borrowed from him. Indeed, the whole city will be in a buzz if we succeed in all we have undertaken. This arrest of K. W. bothers me. He will prattle, I fear. We must shadow him. Who will undertake it?"

"I will," spoke up a small man, "and spike his tallow if I find him sneaking."

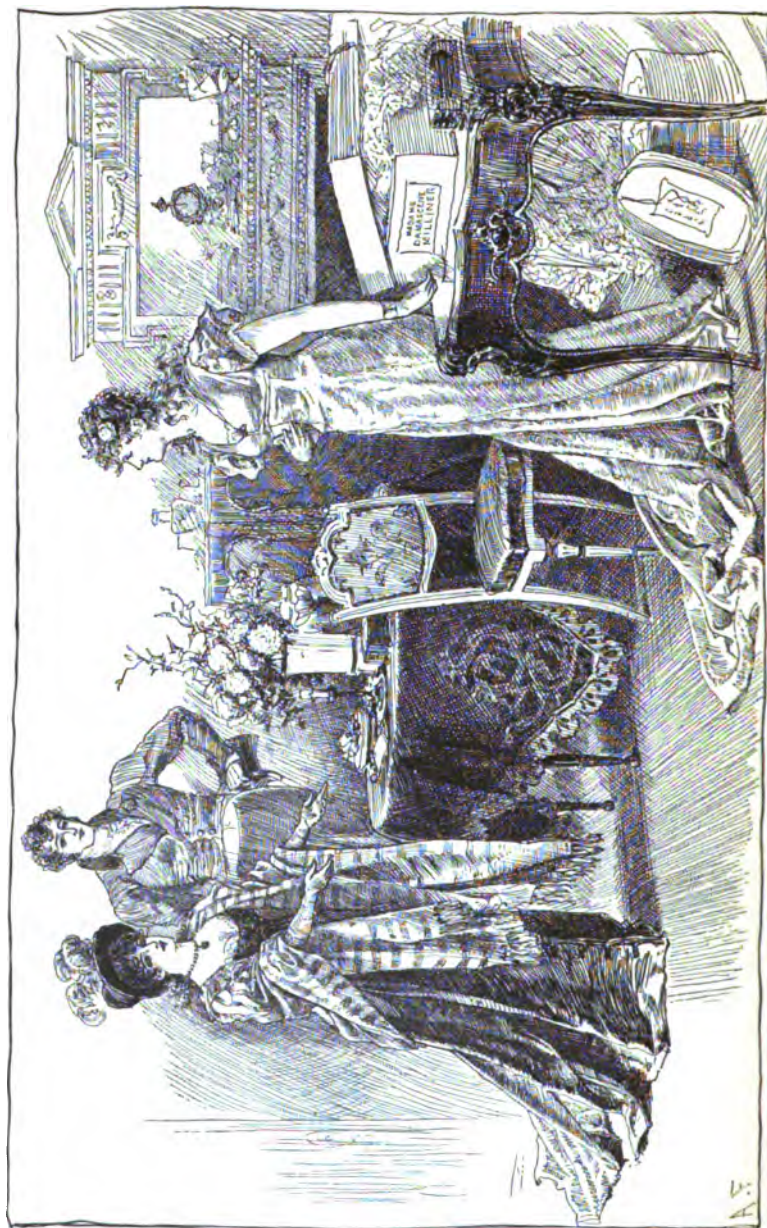
"That is well," said the chief. "Now let us come to a conclusion as to what is to be done with the man in the box there. He has been seen sailing in company with English Charley, who evidently thinks he is going to get something out of him. Shall I send him to the schooner and settle with him there?"

"Yes," said they all in chorus, "and God help him when Mercy gets his grip upon him."

"That's settled, then," said the chief; "now let us scatter. I must be at my rooms by twelve o'clock, ready to lay out my work in the morning."

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Just then came a knock at the door, and Flossy, hastily thrusting her later acquisitions into the box, called out, "Come in," and in walked Mrs. Eton and Mr. Deville.

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CHAPTER XV.

ALLAN DARE SCORES A SUCCESS.

WHEN the members of the mysterious assembly, described in the last chapter, departed from the old building in Pine Street, the chief paused to leave some orders with Hans in regard to the man in the box, to whom reference had been made.

The night was dark, and the street-lamps threw a dim light upon objects near them, while those a little remote were wrapped in gloom. The old watchmen had nearly all slipped off into boozing dens, where they might be seen drinking away what little sense nature had furnished them.

Occasionally our acquaintances of the secret loft would come across a watchman seated on a cellar-door, with his dim lantern by his side, taking all the comfort he could get on such an uncomfortable perch. These were of a class who had no money to spend in drinking dens, and so they served as landmarks to rogues; although, to tell the truth, the latter bothered themselves little about them.

It is likely that, out of the fifty people that entered Hans Hammel's house, not a single one was noticed by a watchman. Had any stray guardian of the night lounged into Hans Hammel's, that worthy would have clasped him in his arms and said, "Mine tear frent, how you vos now? Mein Gott! but I vos glat ter she yer," and he would have taken him to the cellar, where a good fire was burning, and have soon put him to sleep over a mug of ale—just enough drugged to quiet him effectually.

No one of the fraternity of watchmen ever dreamed that Hans's establishment was a den of robbers, although they often dropped in of a night to drink a mug of beer, feeling sure they would not be called upon to pay for it.

"No, no," said the generous Hans, "I neffer sharge der prave garchens off der proberly off der beeples nottin'—mein Gott, no! Vot you dinks I vos—a prute? Trink as mush as yer likes, vich yer'll find petter as goot. All I shall asksh is jusht loog out a leetle for mein proberly—not too mush, for, mein Gott! dose rop-pers der dinks if der sees yer here too mush Hans Hammel got monish, an' dose roppers might zhoot yer."

So Mr. Hans Hammel had everything his own way, so far as the

watchmen were concerned. He would go down to the little cellar, and, walking on tiptoe, his finger on his lips—"Hist!" he would say. "Mein Gott! be carefult. Dose shentlemans ub stairsh eatin' dose zhrimp vich effery potty likes mush nod see yer, der garchens off der proberly off der skidershina. Trink ant pe'appy, bud makes no noish, ant ven yer goesh, valk ub der shellar stebs; yer are save mit me."

So the old watchmen, after enjoying their mugs of ale, would steal out and discuss on some convenient door-steps the virtues of Hans Hammel.

"The most whole-souled citizen of New York," one would say.

"Yes," another would affirm, "the watchman's best friend; his loss would be a public calamity."

"Ah, God forbid that anything should happen to him! We must look out for his property." So this rendezvous of burglars being under the especial protection of the police, it was hardly possible for any one to find out what was going on within.

Notwithstanding all the visitors to the rendezvous were linked together in crime, the chief took special pains that none of them should be able to point out the room in which the assembly met.

After the members were blindfolded the waiter led them around the room through the door and back, with an occasional caution to mind the door and not to strike themselves, until he put them in the closet, where they were pivoted into the assembly-room. The same ceremony was repeated on their return. No one suspected the location of the room, or supposed it to be adjoining the one where they were blindfolded. They thought it in some distant part of the house.

No one knew the chief except as they saw him at the assembly. If they had met him on the street in ordinary dress they would never have suspected it was he. Even the four principal confederates did not know him except under some disguise. He always came first to the rendezvous and put on his disguise, and was the last to leave. The whole scheme was well calculated to deceive a police force such as New York possessed in those days.

Here, then, were planned those mysterious robberies that had for so long baffled the authorities of the city. All classes of the community seemed to be represented at the meetings; and, in many cases, persons there were driven to become thieves from the fact that while their employers were rolling in wealth they received only the most niggardly wages.

These remarks are not intended as an apology for crime, but as a warning to those who are amassing millions from the labors of the poor. Let them remember that, while they are rolling in luxury and free from temptation, the poor are obliged to live from hand to mouth, with temptation staring them constantly in the face.

When people have all they want, there is no reason why they should yield to temptation; but there are thousands of reasons why they should be tolerant of the poor wretches whom they have driven to crime by their own meanness.

This applies particularly in our day to the great monopolists and speculators, who, by means of their wealth, are enabled to enact laws making the rich richer and the poor poorer. How seldom do we hear of any legislation for the benefit of the working classes, who are obliged to take what their employers choose to give them, or go without anything! What is more natural under such circumstances than for the employés to cheat their masters when they have a chance, and finally to drift into crime and the penitentiary?

The three men who had been assigned to the task of robbing Mr. Morton's bank wended their way to Front Street, and stopped at a common-looking edifice that might pass for a sailors' boarding-house. They went up-stairs to the room they had hired and sat down on the rickety chairs.

"I say, Bill," said one, "it strikes me that the chief ain't got all the brains in the establishment. I was thinking as we came along what a mess we would get into if we went through that wall. Now I've thought of a better plan. We will see the chief clerk and arrange it with him. At noon the cashier and three of the clerks go to lunch, while the chief clerk and an under clerk stay in the bank, and a watchman sits on the front steps. We can dress as three swells, and go into the front door of the bank when we see the cashier and the other clerks have gone. As I go up the steps I will drop half a dollar, which the watchman will pick up and call my attention to, and I will say, 'Keep it for your honesty and drink my health with it.' Ten to one he will go for a drink, and, if he does, I will iron and gag the chief clerk, while you two throw a bag over the youngster's head and tie his hands behind him. Three minutes will be time enough to pocket the contents of the strong-box, and a wagon and swift horse will soon take us out of sight of the watchman. If the watchman don't go for his drink we must try the other way."

The others were much pleased with the plan of their comrade, and it was agreed to try it. "There is one thing we were fortunate in," said the one addressed as Bill, "and that was in disguising ourselves so thoroughly when we were working on the wall. Our wigs would fool any one."

On the day of the robbers' meeting Allan Dare had closeted with him at his place of residence, Gabrielle, the girl who had been directed to shadow Jane Rosa.

Gabrielle had been for three days closely watching the post-office to see if any one called for the letter sent to K. W., but no one came. The postmaster directed that no letter should be delivered to those initials from six in the evening till eight in the morning, during which time Gabrielle was off watch. A policeman with a warrant in his pocket for the man named Cole, was always on the alert to arrest any one whom Gabrielle should point out to him.

On this morning a delicate-looking boy appeared at the post-office window, and inquired for a letter addressed to K. W. The clerk was a long time in finding the letter, in the mean while Gabrielle being notified, who soon appeared at the window to inquire if there were any letters for her. As soon as the clerk saw her he gave the boy the letter for K. W. The boy started toward Broadway, Gabrielle following at a short distance, and the policeman following her.

The boy loitered along, gazing into the shop-windows, and at length, after consulting a clock, quickened his steps and turned into Fulton Street. At the end of the first block he stopped at a house and put his hand on the door-knocker. Then Gabrielle pounced upon him and held him. "Ah, little thief, you picked my pocket!" she exclaimed. "There is my purse in your bosom," she said as she adroitly placed it there.

The boy trembled. There was the purse which the girl said was hers. How was he to prove that he did not steal it?

"I ain't no thief," said the boy, whimpering. "Come in here and I'll prove it."

The door opened and they passed in, Gabrielle lingering a little and abusing the boy, until the policeman arrived and took his station by the door. The boy opened a door on the right, and Gabrielle dragged him up to a gentleman, who was writing at a desk and who raised his eyes in astonishment.

"Is this here thief yourn?" said Gabrielle. "He's gone an' stole my purse, an' I found it stickin' in his buzzim, an' I'm going to take the law on him for it."

"He's no thief, my good girl," said the man. "I've had him in my employ some time, and he is honest as the sun."

"Then the sun must be a big thief," said the girl, "for here's my purse that I tuck out of his buzzim. What do you call that if it ain't stealin'? I had a dollar and a shillin' in it."

"I went to the post-office, sir," said the boy, "and got your letter, and never stopped on the way or spoke to any one."

"I don't believe a word of it," said the girl; "you ain't got no letter. Seein' is believin'; it's all an excuse."

"Here it is," said the boy, handing the letter to his employer. "You'll believe it now, won't you?"

"Not unless the gentleman will say it's his letter. How do I know but what you've been stealing a letter out of some one's pocket?"

"Yes, my girl," said the man, "this letter is mine, and, to convince you, I will open and read it. You don't suppose I would commit a criminal act by opening another person's letter?" and he opened the letter and began to read.

In a moment his hand shook and his knees trembled. He snatched his hat and made toward the door, without an apology for his sudden exit. As he stepped into the street, Gabrielle, who was close behind, called out, "Seize him!" and before the man could collect his senses the policeman held him by the collar.

It was but a moment, however, for the fugitive, although not a stout man, was a powerful one. He shook the policeman off and was about to take to his heels when Gabrielle threw her arms about his neck from behind, and encumbered him with her weight so that he could not move. The policeman now soon had him in irons.

A crowd collected, and a couple of constables coming up to see what was the matter, the policeman said to one of them, "Here, Traddles, help me to get this fellow in-doors." The constable lending a hand, the prisoner was taken within and the door locked upon the crowd.

It did not take Gabrielle many minutes to go all through the house, locking all the doors and securing the keys.

The house had evidently been used by the prisoner as a sleeping place. One bedroom up-stairs was scantily furnished, and there

was a cot for the boy. These two persons were apparently the sole occupants of the premises.

In the confusion the boy had disappeared. "Bad lot that," she said. "He has carried off my purse," and so he had.

After the man was locked in the parlor, under charge of a constable, Gabrielle wrote a note and sent it by the policeman to the restaurant corner of Broadway and Leonard Street. In about three quarters of an hour there was a knock at the street-door, and the Rev. Mr. Raymond sent in his card. Gabrielle went out at once to him. The reverend gentleman said to her, "Gabrielle, I come apparently to see this gentleman in a law case. You understand?" He then took the keys of the house and put them in his pocket.

The Rev. Mr. Raymond now examined the house carefully, feeling the wall-paper with the point of his penknife. He particularly examined the fireplace in the prisoner's bedroom. There was no fire burning, but it was full of ashes and half-burned wood. On examining the bricks at the back of the fireplace, he found that the mortar for three courses of bricks was newer than the rest. He immediately forced the bricks up with the tongs. There was nothing visible but an iron plate. "Under that," he muttered. "The fellow is a bungler. I said so from the first."

With some trouble the plate was removed, and beneath it appeared several small boxes. One, of Russia leather, contained a diamond necklace, evidently belonging to Mrs. Ruggles. Another contained four rows of black pearls, then considered more valuable even than diamonds. The small boxes contained four watches and two diamond bracelets.

The Rev. Mr. Raymond rubbed his hands. "This will do for the present. There's quite a fortune stowed away in the fireplace."

He now quickly restored the iron plate and the bricks to their places, and pushed the ashes back into the fireplace. Then he lighted a fire and sat down in front for a quiet smoke.

No one, to look at this man, would have supposed that he had achieved a great victory over the gang of robbers that infested the city, and that he was about to carry joy to the heart of the old chief of police, who had been so roundly abused by the press.

He finished smoking his cigar, and, locking the door of the room, went down-stairs. Gabrielle was seated in a chair in the hall. "Wait here," said he, "until the prisoner is removed; then lock the front door and bring me the key."

Allan Dare, for it was he, walked slowly, like a decrepit man,

until he saw a hack, which he signaled, and entering rode to the police-office.

He found the chief of police sitting over the fire and very much out of sorts; in his hand was a newspaper that he had been reading.

"Well, Dare," he said, "glad to see you, but I wish you would come in any other disguise than that. I feel as if I should have to fork over a five-dollar bill for the church. Have you any news?"

"Not a great deal," said Allan, "but I have bagged Cole and have the darbies on him. I have recovered Mrs. Ruggles's diamonds and Mrs. Vandusen's black pearls, two diamond bracelets, and four gold watches."

"The devil you have!" exclaimed the chief. "Excuse me, reverend sir, but I came near swearing," and he danced around the room with excitement. "Tell me all about it; I'm crazy to know."

Allan Dare locked the door, and taking from his pocket the boxes containing the jewelry, laid them before the amazed chief of police.

"Well, well," said the latter, "this repays me for months of mortification—and all done within a week. I am satisfied now that I have hitherto been surrounded by a set of imbeciles."

"I hope, sir, that after this, when a croaking old preacher complains to you that I have run off with his granddaughter, you won't believe him."

"Hush! don't ever mention that again; but I salute you, Mr. Vidocq Le Coque, as the great master of your profession."

"That is the greatest compliment I ever received," said Allan. "And now, sir, send a carriage to No. 309 Fulton Street for the prisoner. I place these jewels in your possession. Most of the credit for this job is due to that bright girl Gabrielle, who must be amply rewarded."

"She shall be," said the chief. "I will make the owners of the property pony up well, which they will be quite willing to do. Now sit down and tell me how the work was done."

"I had just sat down to breakfast," said Allan Dare, "when Gabrielle sent me a note announcing success. I jumped up and went to the scene of action without tasting a mouthful. So, if you will come around to a restaurant with me, we will take a private room and I will tell you the whole story over a good breakfast."

"But, first and foremost, Dare," said the chief, "let me write a few lines for the newspapers. It will afford a subject for conver-

sation in every house in New York." He sat down and wrote as follows :

"Important arrest and recovery of stolen goods.

"The villain who stole the diamonds from Mrs. Ruggles, in Duane Street, and the black pearls from Mrs. Vandeusen, has been arrested by our vigilant police. In his possession were found, also, four gold watches and two diamond bracelets, which will be returned to their owners by the chief of police, upon their proving their right to the property."

"That's almost too modest," said the chief, "but it's modeled after Perry's report of his victory on Lake Erie."

"It reminds me, also, of Cæsar's *Veni, vidi, vici*," said Allan Dare.

Over the breakfast, which was now in order, the chief received a full account of the whole affair from beginning to end.

CHAPTER XVI.

ALADDIN.

WHEN the newspapers came out the next morning there was great excitement throughout the city. The item concerning the arrest of the thief was inserted just as the chief of police wrote it, which whetted the curiosity of the people to know more. The news-gatherers for the daily papers rushed to the police-office to learn particulars, but it was deemed prudent by the chief to withhold them. The papers, however, managed to make several columns of reading matter out of the scanty details furnished.

The excitement hourly increased, for it was hinted that further developments had been made, showing that there was an extensive organization of house-breakers existing, of a character never before known.

The newspaper-offices were thronged by citizens anxious to obtain the latest information, and the presses were forced to their utmost to enable the editors to supply the demand for extra copies. All that was certainly known, however, was that a man was in jail and some jewels had been recovered, but who the man was, or where or by whom arrested, no one knew.

Mr. Eton had just opened his paper, and his wife had taken a seat by his side, when the merchant suddenly exclaimed, "Good gracious! Fanny, they have captured one of the robbers at the Vandensen ball and recovered some of the jewelry!"

"You don't mean it!" said Mrs. Eton, jumping up. "Have they recovered my diamonds?"

"No, dearest," he replied, "and I don't care if they never do. The house of Eton & Co. can stand the loss of ten sets of diamonds without wincing. I am not going around whining over the loss of a little jewelry, as old Vandensen does over his wife's black pearls—which are not half as pretty as white ones, anyhow."

"Do you think so, darling?" said Mrs. Eton, in her most winning way. "Oh, but I did long for a set of black pearls, just to show those Vandensens they were not the only ones that could wear them. But if you think white pearls are prettier, I will be satisfied with three strings of them, but not smaller than marrowfat peas."

"Humph!" said Mr. Eton, looking at his wife over his spectacles, "I should think so."

"Yes, you dear old duck of a darling," said the innocent wife; "I'm proud when I wear handsome jewelry, as it shows people how rich you are. I heard a person remark at old Vandensen's ball that Eton & Co. must be coining money, as Mrs. Eton wore such magnificent diamonds."

"Why do you call Vandensen old, Fanny?" said Mr. Eton; "he is only fifty."

"Why, darling, he looks twenty years older than you. When you walk, your step is as elastic as a boy's."

"You shall have the pearls, darling," said Mr. Eton, "but I will give you a white set first. They will better become your youth and beauty."

As soon as Mr. Eton arrived at his office he wrote to his agent in Paris to send a set of false pearls, not to cost over four hundred dollars, but to send a bill at eighteen thousand.

That evening, after dinner, Deville came in, when Mr. Eton declared that he must go to his club. "I hope, darling," he said to his wife, "that you'll make yourself very agreeable to Deville while I am absent"; and to Deville he remarked, "I hate to leave my wife, even for an hour; she makes my life pass so charmingly, and is always so thoughtful of my comfort; but men in my position have duties to perform, and, as I am an important club man, and chair-

man of the committee on expenditures, I must go there to-night." Neither Mrs. Eton nor Deville interposing any objections, he departed.

Mrs. Eton asked Deville, as soon as they were alone, what he thought of the news in regard to the arrest of a robber and the recovery of jewelry. Deville replied that he thought the whole gang would be captured, for he was satisfied there must be an extensive organization, with some very able man at the head of it. "We can not," said he, "depend even on our own servants, who, in many cases, are probably leagued with the thieves."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Eton, "how do I know that my French maid is not one of the gang? She's got such a queer name—Louise Mathilde Iolanthe Bric à Brac. I call her Lu."

"Very likely," said Deville, "that you will not find out whether she is honest until after your new set of diamonds are walked off with."

"And my old bear is going to give me a set of pearls worth eighteen thousand dollars! What do you think of that? And all the time I do not love him a bit—although he thinks I do."

"He had better give you a ship and cargo at once," said Deville; "perhaps that would open your heart to him."

"Oh, heavens! he is awful, and I am so tired of coddling him. Do you know the old song?—

"A young man, a young man ever for me,
May and December can never agree."

But tell me, false knight, what were you doing when you spent all last evening at the Mortons? I was so angry that I went up-stairs and rubbed at the spot where you kissed me the other night until I nearly rubbed the skin off."

"That was a mistake on my part," said Deville. "I should have had more respect for your husband, who has always treated me so confidingly—"

"And who," she said, excitedly, "you would betray to-morrow if you had not become enamored of Miss Morton's ugly black eyes. Do you deny that?"

"I deny nothing," said Deville, "but I can not think Miss Morton's eyes ugly."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Eton, "I see how it is; you are just devoted to that girl. If you visit there again you'll break my heart," and she burst into tears, while Deville sat quietly by without attempt-

ing to soothe her. "To think that you," she continued, sobbing, "should be taken with a girl just from school, with a figure like a French doll, and as awkward as a young calf, while I, who am devoted to you, and have a figure and style that every one of the women of fashion envy, can not win a smile from you."

"Oh, yes, you can," said Deville, quietly. "If you will only get a note in Mrs. Vandeußen's handwriting, and signed with her name, giving me permission to take a friend of mine to her Saturday reception, I will give you all the smiles you want."

"And you won't look at Miss Morton's ugly eyes?" she said, brightening up.

"No," said Deville, "I won't look at her eyes."

"Well, then, you shall have the note to-morrow, for next Monday Mrs. Vandeußen and her daughter start for New Orleans. The doctor has ordered them to leave as soon as possible, for Miss Vandeußen has consumptive symptoms."

"Then," said Deville, "we are friends again, and I will call to-morrow for the note. Now I must go, for I have so much to do this evening." He arose and offered her his hand, but Mrs. Eton pouted and put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"And this is your promise to Mr. Eton," she said, "not to leave me alone this evening, with the city full of robbers!" Here she sobbed outright.

Devil was not made of stone, so he sat down on the sofa and, putting his arm around her waist, raised her beautiful head and kissed her pouting lips. She clasped his hand nervously and looked up into his face, her look telling all that was in her heart.

He, however, seemed to be impelled only by an impulse of kindness. It was as if he had kissed a spoiled sister. Then he arose to go, she clinging to him until he got to the door. As the door closed she flung herself into an easy-chair and seemed to be absorbed in a reverie.

Mr. Eton came home about an hour later, and his wife ran to meet him with every appearance of affection.

"O darling!" she exclaimed, "how I have missed you! You must manage to stay at home oftener. I feel so lonely when you are away. Deville has been so stupid I could hardly get a word out of him. I think the story that he has left his heart in Europe must be true."

"Yes," said Mr. Eton; "but, Fanny, you must try and keep him as our honored guest. He will be a millionaire yet, and I

want to keep in with him. I might some day need an advance, though the house of Eton & Co. could lay him out twice over just now—but who knows?"

That evening Robert le Diable called at Brice's quarters and found the father seated on the sofa, having apparently quite recovered from his late adventure. He was dressed in a blue coat with brass buttons. His handsome daughter (in a neat gray costume with lace sleeves and scarf) was hemming some handkerchiefs by his side.

Robert looked in astonishment at the metamorphosed girl and took in her singular beauty, while old Brice lost not a single expression of his face.

"You look better, Mr. Brice, than when last I saw you," said Robert.

"Yes," said Brice, "I am better, but I had to sit three days with beefsteaks over my eyes to take out the swelling and bruises. Even now I am not quite free of them. Confound that fist of yours; you might as well have hit me with a sledge-hammer at once."

"You naughty man!" said Flossy, "I don't think I can ever like you for striking papa. You ought to have let him shoot you—but then I wouldn't have these nice clothes. What do you think of me, sir?"

"That you are simply beautiful beyond imagination."

"You dear, nice man!" was the quick reply. "Papa never said that much to me. He's been so busy admiring himself that he took very little notice of me. I have been dressed up three days, waiting for you to come, for I knew you would say something nice to me. I was out all the morning the day after you left us, and found a Madame Bobinet, who had a stock of dresses already made up, and who supplied me with what I required for the present. I bought you, Mr. Robert, a Russia-leather pocket-book in which to put your money and notes, for I noticed you pulled them out of your pocket the other night, and that's not nice."

"I must tell you," said Robert, after thanking her for the pocket-book, "that you are to move to-morrow into your new quarters, with which I am sure you will be charmed. I will call for you at ten o'clock. And here, Mr. Brice, is your first month's pay in advance," which the gentleman in question pocketed very readily.

"Mr. Robert," said Flossy, "don't forget that we are now to be known as the Carroltons," and she laughed merrily.

"Now," said Robert, "I must bid you good-night," and he started for the door.

"Wait," said Flossy, running after him, "you dear, good man, I must reward you for your kindness," and she raised herself on her toes and kissed his cheek. "Now go to sleep on that."

"You are a bright little kitten," said Robert, "and ought one day to make some good man's heart glad."

"Yes," said she, "that's what I'm going to be—a nice little kitten—men take so kindly to helpless ones."

At ten next morning Robert called with a hack and took father and daughter, with their trunks, to No. 69 Chambers Street, where he led the way up-stairs to a handsome suite of rooms, consisting of a parlor and two bedrooms.

On the center-table in the parlor was a large bouquet, in the center of which the name "Flossy" appeared in violets.

"Oh, you darling man!" screamed the girl when she saw the flowers, and, seizing his hand, she kissed it.

"If he stands that," thought Carrolton, as he is now to be called, "he is adamant."

Then they went to examine the bedrooms, where every comfort was to be found.

"I don't see how I am to pay for all this grandeur," said Carrolton, "out of two hundred dollars a month."

"These are my quarters," said Robert, "for which, at present, I have no use; therefore your rent will be nothing. Your meals will be sent to you from the caterer's; you can order what you please."

"And what service am I to render for all this?" said Carrolton.

"Merely buy and sell stocks as I direct," said Robert. "You are to operate in Wall Street."

"What a relief!" said Carrolton, drawing a long breath. "I thought I had to do some devilish thing or other; but you've found my price, and I'd go to the devil for you."

"And what am I to do," added Flossy, "for all that I am getting?"

"Why, play the sweet little kitten that you are," replied Robert. "And here is a silver card-case full of visiting-cards, with your name, Miss Flossy Carrolton, engraved upon them. To-morrow

Madame Bobinet will call with an assortment of dresses and millinery, such as the most fashionable ladies wear—bonnets, gloves, fans—everything, in fact, that a lady wants. Here's five hundred dollars to pay for them; don't say a word. When I call to-morrow I shall expect to see you dressed in a charming costume." With these words he disappeared.

Flossy stood looking at the notes in her hand. "Papa," she cried, "this gentleman must be Aladdin of the wonderful lamp. You never had anything like this since I've known you, papa. We lived in awful poor quarters in England, and the place we've just left was simply a pig-pen."

"Well, child," said the father, "we certainly *seem* to be in luck. I only hope everything is all right."

"Why, popsy, what a goosey-gander you are! as if that handsome gentleman could do anything wrong. He's an angel in disguise."

"Yes, Flossy," said her father, "but the angel who rebelled against God in heaven was as handsome a being as the celestial light ever shone upon, yet he was cast out of heaven for his wickedness."

"I don't know anything about that," said Flossy. "I only know that I adore Mr. Robert, and only hope he'll remember to bring me a handsome breast-pin, for he has forgotten that."

"Ah! woman, woman," exclaimed Carrolton, "how little it takes to tickle your vanity! Flossy, you are like all the rest of your sex."

"Why, dear old popsy," said the girl, "of course I am. Have not I a part to play, else why these dresses, ornaments, bank-notes? I don't know what else is coming, and, papa dear, you know your little Flossy has seen nothing but hard times all her life, and has borne them cheerfully. Now, you dear old pop, I'm going to swing, launch right out on the sea of life and dance over the billows. I shall play my part like a little kitten, full of glee, and, while you are dealing in Wall Street stock, I shall purchase stock in tip-top society. I haven't spent my eighteen years of gypsy life without picking up some stray bits of experience. I have seen what straits you have been in, and what ability you displayed in getting out of them. Do not fear that your little Flossy will not be equal to any emergency. Now, popsy, I'll give you a kiss and lead you into lunch, which is ready. Come and see," she said, running back, "such a lunch as you never saw, and such a charming

set of table-ware ! I don't see why Aladdin didn't stop and lunch with us, just to see how the little kitten enjoys her surroundings."

At that moment Robert walked in unannounced. They invited him to lunch, and he sat down. Presently he put his hand in his pocket and drew forth a small box, which he placed in Flossy's hand. "There's a lady's watch and chain for you," he said, "to make your toilet complete."

Flossy's eyes dilated when, on opening the box, she saw a tiny gold watch set with pearls, and a chain of exquisite workmanship.

"O Aladdin !" she exclaimed, "you are indeed wonderful. Why, I thought this was a breast-pin, as you didn't send one, and I supposed all fashionable young ladies wore them."

"Always call me Aladdin, Miss Flossy," said Robert. "You'll find half a dozen breast-pins here before night. Now, Mr. Carrolton, there will be a handsome carriage here at four o'clock, and I want you and Miss Flossy to ride out on the Bloomingdale Road this afternoon, and let the people see you. I would like you to dress in English style."

"We shall be delighted to oblige you," said Carrolton. "I am dying for a mouthful of fresh air. I haven't been out since the night you carried me home."

"And now, good-day," said Robert, as he rose from the table. "You will not see me again for a week."

CHAPTER XVII.

ANOTHER GREAT ROBBERY.

FOUR days after the arrest of Cole, or K. W., the citizens of New York were again startled by the announcement in the papers of six more audacious robberies.

A merchant on Broadway had five thousand dollars taken from his iron chest, although there were three persons sleeping in the building at the time—a young man and two girls, all of irreproachable character. A house on Bowling Green had been entered, and some two thousand dollars' worth of silverware had been carried off. A house in Church Street had been entered, and all the silver,

and jewelry to a considerable amount, had been taken. Two houses on the Battery had been similarly rifled of valuables.

But worst of all was the bold robbery of Morton & Co.'s banking-house in broad daylight.

It seems that three well-dressed men had taken advantage of the temporary absence of the watchman, and most of the clerks, at luncheon to enter the bank. The chief clerk and an assistant were quickly bound and gagged by the robbers, the bank-vault opened, and when the cashier and other clerks returned from luncheon, it was found that about one hundred and sixty thousand dollars in bank-notes and three thousand dollars in gold coin had been carried off. The most curious part of the business was how the thieves got into the chest containing the money, which was found locked and the key in the chief clerk's pocket.

The natural inference was that the watchman, who had deserted his post on the front steps of the bank, was in collusion with the robbers, although the cashier found him at the door when he returned, a few minutes after the robbery.

As near as the cashier could learn from the statements of the two clerks, who were terribly frightened, the robbers were not in the bank more than five minutes, during which time two stood guard with loaded pistols while the other rifled the vault.

A person in the street saw three men, answering the description given by the watchman, get into a covered wagon and drive rapidly up Broadway, but this circumstance did not arouse his suspicion.

The poor watchman was of course immediately arrested and committed to jail. He had occupied the position for nearly thirty years, and was receiving the enormous salary of twenty-five dollars a month. The plan of the robbers to get rid of him while they operated in the bank had been only too successful.

To describe the excitement of the citizens at this new and extensive raid on their property would be impossible. It seemed as if the robbers were revenging themselves upon the city for the arrest of Cole, and some of the more timid souls began to think it the part of wisdom not to trouble them at all, if they would be content to work on a smaller scale.

As for Mr. Morton, he was almost crushed. The amount stolen consisted of special deposits that he might be called upon at any moment to make good; and, although his private means were large, it was not possible at a moment's notice to command the amount likely to be required. When a bank meets with a

heavy loss the depositors are merciless. Already demands were made at the counter that were promptly liquidated, but checks began to pour in so rapidly that it was feared the cash left on hand would soon be exhausted.

Mr. Morton sat at his desk looking very gloomy. He was thinking that he should have to sacrifice some valuable real estate to meet the demands of his depositors. He thought over the names of bankers to whom he could apply, but the survey did not give him much satisfaction. He feared that most of them would be rather glad to hear of his troubles, as it would add to their own importance.

At this moment word came that Mr. James Deville desired an interview, and that gentleman was accordingly ushered into Mr. Morton's private office.

Mr. Morton received Deville coldly, which was strange, considering that Deville had been introduced at his house a few evenings before. But Mr. Morton looked with some suspicion on a young man who discounted notes at a less rate than his brother bankers—something in the eyes of the fraternity next door to a crime.

Devil had consoled himself for Mr. Morton's coolness, on the occasion of his visit to the house, by conversing with the beautiful Louise, who, although quite as haughty as her father, was not insensible to the brilliant conversation of Deville, or to his handsome face and figure.

George May hung around her most of the time when Deville was present, and seemed somewhat restless at Louise giving any attention to another while he was present; but Louise was thoroughly able to manage any number of lovers.

A smile or two thrown in George May's direction soon made him feel easy in mind, for he was satisfied that he stood high in Louise's favor, and was resolved to make her his wife.

On this particular evening Louise Morton seemed determined to draw Mr. Deville on. She saw that he could not keep his eyes off her, and drank in every word she uttered. She seemed to look through him with her beautiful dark eyes, which at times, when she said something severe, had a sinister expression that made the heart recoil.

When Deville took his leave, at the expiration of an hour, he expressed the hope that he might be permitted to call again, to which Miss Morton answered, "I am always glad to see my father's friends."

It might have been his imagination, but he thought he detected some hauteur in her manner as she said this, and he went to his rooms to meditate for the rest of the evening over his cigar.

After Deville's departure Louise set to work to vex George May by singing Deville's praises. "What a handsome man!" she murmured. "What fine eyes—and such a figure! I do so like tall men."

"And yet," said May, spitefully, "no one knows where the fellow came from, or who he is."

Louise jumped up, her eyes glittering like those of a panther. "Have you dared," she exclaimed, "to introduce into this house a man of whom you know nothing?"

"He has the *entrées* of the best society," said May, "and this must be my excuse."

"That's excuse enough," said Louise; "but it was spiteful in you, Mr. May, to say anything about him. I am sure he is far better than any of the old Knickerbockers and Vandernoodles we met the other night at Vandeusen's. And the man talks so well, I hope he'll come again."

"Yet," said May, "you were not very gracious to him, and did not ask him to repeat his visit."

"Wasn't I?" she said. "I suppose you expected me to embrace him, and ask him to breakfast to-morrow. That's not my way. I keep men at their proper distance."

"So it seems," rejoined May, "for, although I have laid my heart at your feet, you have done nothing but trample on it."

"George May, how can you talk so? Don't I send you on all my errands? If I want a spool of silk, who gets it but you? Who selects my music but you? And haven't I had you running all over New York to obtain a pretty Skye terrier for me? What more could a man want than this? What selfish creatures men are, to be sure!"

"If those are proofs of affection," said May, "I suppose I ought to be satisfied, but I would like some kind words now and then, and soft looks from those beautiful eyes."

She looked at him scornfully. "No man gets that from me yet a while. George May, you are too prosy; let us talk of something else."

"No," said May, "you are tired of me, and I will leave you, hoping to find you in a kinder mood to-morrow." She looked quite indifferent, and May went out with a heavy heart.

As May left the room Mr. Morton entered. "Louise," said he, "I want to have some conversation with you."

"Yes, papa."

"The first thing I have to say to you, Louise, is, that I hope Mr. Deville will not be asked to this house again."

"Why, papa?"

"Because, my child, no one knows who he is or where he came from."

"Perhaps, papa, he is a Knickerbocker or a Vandernoodle in disguise—although I hope he has not the misfortune to belong to any of those antediluvian families. I only know that he is the handsomest man I have seen in society, while report says he is getting on in business, and will soon eclipse all other bankers."

"Nonsense, my child, don't believe all you hear. A man who will discount a note half per cent lower than regular banker's rates can not be a person of much principle. I shouldn't wonder if he hadn't ten thousand dollars in his bank. Mahogany counters and plate-glass windows do not amount to much. You always find solid bankers occupying very modest-looking buildings, Louise."

"Like yours, papa? That is such a dingy old place that it is a trial to me to enter it when I go down town."

"Then don't go there," said Mr. Morton, somewhat nettled. "But listen to me. I have launched you into society at considerable expense, and I don't want you to make any mistakes in your *début*. You should be very careful in selecting your acquaintances, for it would not be pleasant to have your name connected with that of a *parvenu*. When you do marry, I want you to be connected with the first families of the country. Your education, wealth, and beauty will command such an alliance."

"With the Vanderdonks and the Vandernoodles? Yes, papa, it would be charming; but am I to be married right off? Are you not going to allow me a little time to look about and enjoy life? And then, papa, I can't help the expense you have been put to; it wasn't my fault that I was sent into the world."

"Louise," said her father, "you are a most provoking girl. Will you never listen respectfully to what I have to say for your own good? My desire that you should have only the best associates, and should connect yourself with the best families, is certainly a laudable one."

"Yes, papa, but from whom are *we* descended? I never heard

you speak of our ancestors. Are we in any way connected with the Vanderdonks or the Vandernoodles?"

"Hush, Louise, don't be disrespectful. I am the founder of my family, although the Mortons are an ancient and honorable race."

"Why don't we wear their coat-of-arms on the panel of our carriage?"

By this time Mr. Morton was quite out of patience. Looking sternly at his daughter, he said: "Louise, you have been the cause of a great deal of trouble to me, and have formed associations that I have had hard work to break up. That is the reason why I cautioned you against inviting a man to my house of whom I know nothing."

"I will tell Peter, when Mr. Deville calls, that you don't want him to visit here."

"You will do nothing of the kind, miss; you will merely tell Peter to say you are not at home."

"Yes, papa, but that wouldn't be the truth, and mamma says a white lie is the meanest thing in the world."

"You are trying to divert me from the thread of my conversation," said Mr. Morton. "I might as well come to the point at once. When I paid Madame Boulanger's school-bill she said she was afraid I would not be pleased with the little progress you had made, but that it was not her fault, for she had done all she could to advance you, but that you were unmanageable and set her at defiance; and worse still, that you had become involved in a love affair in her school with a brother of one of the young ladies, which was only found out after you went away. Madame Boulanger came to the knowledge of this by finding a package of letters addressed to you, which you left on top of a high shelf, some of which letters were quite abhorrent to the madame's sense of propriety. Here are the letters," said Mr. Morton, taking a package from his pocket. "Had they fallen into unfriendly hands they would have ruined you. I have read them, and the expressions used toward yourself are simply shocking."

"Yes, papa dear," said Louise, "but those letters are not mine. Madeline Spanker, my chummy at school, had my permission to let her lover address his letters for her to me. Madeline kept them in an old hat-box in my room, and used to pass half her time reading them."

Louise told this lie as calmly as any woman of the world, initiated in all its ways, could have done.

"But," said her father, somewhat staggered by his daughter's coolness, "some of Madame Boulanger's most trusted scholars report that you would retire to your room under pretense of not feeling well, and would steal out about dusk, and sometimes be absent an hour from the house, slipping in again through the basement when the supper-bell rang."

"Oh, papa!" said Louise, "to suspect me of such a thing! Why, that was Madeline Spanker, who used to slip out and take a walk with her lover."

"But I am told," said Mr. Morton, "that you wear a gold ring with a man's name engraved on the inside. Let me see it."

Louise was equal to the occasion. "It's all a lie," she said, "from beginning to end. The way I came to have the ring is this: Madeline Spanker got me to wear it for her when we were out of her room, and I would give it to her to wear when we were up-stairs. I came away in a hurry and forgot to give the ring up. Here it is, papa; you can see it if you like," and she handed the ring to him.

Mr. Morton examined the ring closely. It was marked inside "Edgar." Then he put it in his pocket. "Any way," he said, "it's an ugly business, and no young lady of proper notions would have lent herself to such improprieties. It is on account of doubts entertained by me regarding you that I am anxious you should form no more associations of this kind. You must associate only with those in your own sphere. I shall make further inquiries into this matter, for I am not at all satisfied, Louise, with your statement."

"Poor me!" exclaimed Louise, covering her face with her hands and sobbing. "I am to be condemned on the word of that horrid old woman, who, I can tell you, papa, is a most disreputable character, as I can prove." She threw herself upon the sofa and wept bitterly.

Mr. Morton hated a scene, so he rose, and, saying, "We shall see," left the room without making any attempt to soothe his daughter.

He had no sooner departed than Louise stood up, without a tear in her eyes, which were glittering with hate and temper.

"The old hag!" she exclaimed, "to expose me in this way. I will make her life intolerable."

Then she took from her pocket a perfumed note and threw it

into the fire. "They shall not find that out, at all events," she muttered. "I must be more cautious in future."

Mr. Morton was much depressed with the circumstance connected with this interview until the robbery of the bank, a few days after, drove it from his mind. When Deville called he was not in the best of humor.

After formal salutations had passed, Mr. Morton said, "Mr. Deville, to what may I attribute the honor of this visit?"

"To nothing, sir, but to show my respect and sympathy for a gentleman who has met with a misfortune."

"Sympathy!" said the banker, frowning. "I ask no sympathy from any one, if that is all you came for, sir. You see I am very busy; the affairs of my bank take up all my time."

"So I see," said Deville, preserving his calmness; "but my sympathy consists in offering you the use of my bank. I will honor all checks that you may not be able to meet on the instant, for I see your depositors are pressing you. Or I will send over the amount you may require to relieve yourself."

"You, sir!" said the banker, gasping for breath. "Why, you astonish me. My friends have not come forward quite as promptly as I expected to offer their services; and Mr. Eton, on whom I depended, was one of the first to withdraw his deposits. I am much obliged to you, but your action would not stay the torrent."

"If you will excuse me," said Deville, "how much would you require to meet all demands?"

"More than you ever dreamed of, young man," said Morton, sarcastically. "I shall need two hundred thousand dollars. I have more than that out in loans of hand, but can not make them available at short notice. Thank you for your offer, but you can not help me; it would require too much money."

"If you will permit me," said Deville, "I will deposit two hundred thousand dollars in your bank in half an hour."

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Morton to himself, "how unjust have I been to this man! Sir," he said, taking Deville by the hand, "you are one of nature's noblemen, and I shall always honor and respect you—yet in my heart I did you injustice. I am not one who lightly gives his friendship to any one. I am perhaps a cold, calculating man, yet I honor nobleness of character, and you may rest assured that I shall remain your debtor all my days. I could have tided over this difficulty had there been the least warn-

ing of a rush on the bank, but it came like a clap of thunder, and I almost sunk under the blow.

"My life has been fortunate in money matters, so that I am not used to reverses, and it would be a great mortification to me to be obliged to close my bank even temporarily. Thanks to you, I shall not need to do so now, and my credit will be more than secured. In an hour more I might have been forced to close my doors. But my depositors will soon bring their money back, when they find I have ample funds to meet all demands. But what a treacherous world this is, and how little can friends be depended on in an emergency!"

Deville listened quietly to Mr. Morton's remarks. "I had better go and send over my deposit," he said, "for I see checks are coming in faster than your clerks can pay them."

"But before you go," said Mr. Morton, "let me say to you that I trust hereafter we shall be warm friends, and that you will make my house your home. My wife and daughter will always make you welcome," and he pressed Deville's hand warmly.

Deville shortly returned with two clerks carrying packages of notes. As soon as the crowd of depositors that were surging around the counter perceived that the resources of the bank were unlimited they commenced to waver, and many of them went home without stopping to get their money.

Next day most of the money that had been drawn from the bank was again deposited, and Mr. Morton's credit stood higher than ever.

"Louise," said Mr. Morton that evening, "I have made a great mistake in regard to Mr. Deville. I want him received and treated as my warmest friend."

"Yes, papa; have you found out that he is related to the Vandernoodles or the Knickerwinkles? I always thought he would turn out to be a prince in disguise."

"No, my child, but he is one of nature's noblemen, and I am under obligations to him such as I can never repay."

Notwithstanding Mr. Morton had come out of the day's struggle successfully, he had rather a sore heart. He had lost over two hundred thousand dollars by the robbery—a large fortune in those days—and then his wife's diamonds had been stolen. It would take time to repair these great losses, and the banker's anxiety of mind was so great that he seemed to become older and grayer from day to day.

On his return to his lodgings Deville found a note from Mrs. Eton, inclosing one in Mrs. Vandeußen's handwriting, as follows :

MY DEAR MRS. ETON : It will afford me the greatest pleasure to receive, at any time, a visit from Mr. Deville and any friend he may bring with him.

He will always be welcome at my house. I leave to-morrow morning for New Orleans with my daughter, and shall expect to see Mr. Deville on our return.

Yours lovingly,

EMMA VANDEUSEN.

Deville smiled pleasantly when he read this note, which he locked up carefully in his writing-desk.

Mr. Vandeußen did not accompany his wife and daughter on their journey. He was too much involved in his gas project, which at this time was going on swimmingly. The company had been formed, and the stock was up to a hundred and fifty dollars a share, with a prospect that it would pay finally twenty-five per cent dividend.

Every night Mr. Vandeußen's house was brilliantly illuminated, and the street-lamps threw their bright light over the throng of people that assembled to gaze on the novel spectacle of night turned into day.

All the iron-foundries in the city were engaged in manufacturing pipes, which were being laid along the streets to the great discomfort of pedestrians, who often blessed Mr. Vandeußen for his zeal ; but he went ahead in despite of criticism, looking to the future for his vindication.

The day of the run on Mr. Morton's bank Mr. Eton returned home from his counting-house in high good humor.

"I have done a good business to-day, darling," he said to his wife. "Two ships came in from China loaded with teas. Tea will go off like hot cakes. Silks have advanced, and I will get rid of mine by the end of the week. I have saved twenty thousand dollars by withdrawing my deposits from that purse-proud fellow, Morton, who by this time to-morrow will be a financial wreck. He couldn't buy his wife another set of diamonds, and I don't see how he can possibly stand the loss of so much money in a lump."

"Why, darling," said his wife, "you ought to have had pity on him, for, even if you had lost the money, the house of Eton & Co. could stand it."

"Business is business, Fanny," said Mr. Eton. "I must look

out for the pennies if I want the dollars to take care of themselves. A man who trusts his chief clerk with the key of the strong-box while the cashier goes out to lunch isn't much of a banker. It rather pleases me to see these haughty aristocrats get a knock occasionally. Ha! ha! they'll never catch Job Eton that way. I haven't much faith in banks, and what money I have by me is kept in a stone vault, the key always in my pocket, and a watchman with a double-barreled shotgun always on hand. That's the way to keep money secure, Fanny."

"Oh, darling!" said Mrs. Eton, "I am sorry for the way you have acted to Mr. Morton. I don't love you a bit to-night." She went out of the room, leaving Eton with no company but his newspaper.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE OLD SOLDIER AND THE DRAYMAN.

WORDS can not express the consternation of the old chief of police when he heard of the extensive robberies that had been committed in one twenty-four hours. He started at once for the quarters of Allan Dare, whom he found quietly reading the papers and trying to learn something that would give him a clew to the affair.

"What do you think of this business, Allan?" exclaimed the almost breathless chief. "This will never do; I shall have all the newspapers down on me."

"Probably you will," said Allan Dare, handing the chief a chair. "They would hardly lose such an opportunity to amuse the public. These robberies satisfy me that there is a great organization of thieves in this city, directed by some person of superior capacity. Cole probably belonged to the society, but he was a bungler. The blows lately struck show what an able general is conducting the campaign."

"What are we to do about it?" asked the chief.

"You know," said Allan, "that I ordered the girl Gabrielle to shadow Jane Ross. Gabrielle behaved so stupidly in the house where she was employed that Jane took her for an idiot, and paid so little attention to her that Gabrielle had many opportunities of

watching her. Three nights ago she saw the Ross girl go out, and followed her, never losing sight of her, although she turned and twisted about like a hare.

"Gabrielle followed the girl to a low eating-house in Pine Street, where she disappeared. Gabrielle placed herself on watch across the street, and in the course of half an hour saw some forty people, men and women, enter the house. After a time Gabrielle went into the eating-house. It was a dirty place, with a few old tables and chairs, and an old German with a white apron acting as master of ceremonies. 'Vot vill yer av?' he said; 'shops mit pred and putter, or dose zhrimp vich effry potty likes so mush?' 'I will take a cup of coffee,' said Gabrielle. 'Vell,' he said, 've doshent shell dose dings.' 'Then I will take a cup of tea,' said Gabrielle. 'Mein Gott!' said the German, 'dosh yer dinks I shell dose tings too? No, no, goes home, goot girls; we shells nottings but shops and dose zhrimp.' So Gabrielle went away. She saw no one in the dining-room out of the many that had entered; and the few persons she saw leave the building came from a cellar below the dining-room. Depend upon it, sir, that is one of the thieves' rendezvous, for no doubt they have several."

"But what were the women doing there?" said the chief.

"They are the tools," said Dare, "with which burglars work. They open houses from the inside, give information, take keys from doors to give impressions, make dogs temporarily sick, so that they'll give no alarm, and a thousand other deviltries. Why, sir, I spent a year among the thieves of Paris just to learn their tricks. In a few days I shall have some assistants that I can depend upon, and then you will see us begin to do something."

"By that time," said the chief, despondingly, "half the houses in New York will be robbed. Why not examine this public-house?"

"That would put the rogues on their guard. But I will find out all about it before the week is out, and the thieves be none the wiser. In the mean time we will have to use such of the police as we can trust to try and act on the information I shall gain. I will go at once to Morton's bank and ascertain the numbers of the bank-bills stolen. As to the gold, that's all melted up by this time. Attention should be paid first to great matters; the small ones will take care of themselves. Now, sir, will you please write a note introducing me to the banker, and asking permission for me to examine the premises, and obtain such testimony as may be needed?"

"I will leave you," said Allan after the note was written. "It would not do to have us seen together, and I have to put on my disguise before leaving for the bank."

On his way to the office the chief stopped for half an hour at a chop-house for lunch, and, when he reached his office, was told that a man was waiting to see him.

The person in question was an odd-looking character. He had but one arm and one leg, the arm having seemingly been amputated at the shoulder, and the leg above the knee. He had an ordinary wooden leg, very wide trousers, and carried a heavy crutch. He had one dark, fierce-looking eye, and over the other a green patch; his hair was long, black, and unkempt, his clothes shabby, and of a semi-military cut. Altogether this man was not an agreeable spectacle, no matter how much he might excite one's sympathies.

The chief looked at the stranger while he with difficulty tried to rise from his chair. "Keep your seat, my man," he said, "and say your say. What do you want with me?"

The man spoke in broken English. "As you see, sir," said he, "I am a wounded soldier. I was at Waterloo, and was for three years afterward in the Hôtel des Invalides at Paris, but my daughter and her husband determined to immigrate to America, and brought me with them, as I couldn't live away from my daughter and her child. Two years ago my son-in-law got into bad habits and began to abuse me. Finally he turned me out of doors. Of course, a man in my condition can't do much, and I have been obliged to beg. I am only half a man, and yet the monster that married my daughter turned me into the street."

"If what you say is true, he must be a wretch indeed," said the chief of police.

"All true, sir, I assure you; but I think I can get even with him. He is engaged in work that will bring him to jail."

"What!" exclaimed the chief, his mind running on the recent robberies, and believing he was about to receive important information. "Where does he live? What's his name, and what has he been doing?"

"His name, sir, is Pierre Chauvel; he lives at 340 Front Street, and his crime is house-breaking."

"House-breaking!" cried the chief; "can you prove it?"

"Yes, sir, I can."

"And what may your name be?" asked the chief.

"My name," said the stranger, quietly, "is Allan Dare. Perhaps you have heard of me."

"Sold again!" exclaimed the chief. "But where in the name of heaven are your leg, your arm, and your eye?"

"They are all here," said Allan, "stowed away; but I hope you are satisfied that I know how to disguise myself."

The disguise was simple enough when Allan explained it to the chief. The missing arm merely hung down at the side. The lower part of one leg was triced up inside the wide trousers, the patch being easily applied. The nose was of silver, enameled to represent that of a drunkard.

"But how do you expect to gain admittance to the bank in this guise?" asked the chief. "They would order you out as a loafer."

"Not with your note. When they see how I go to work I will soon obtain admittance. I came only to let you see me in one of my characters."

"The devil wouldn't know you in your present shape," said the chief, "and I begin to think you must be in league with his satanic majesty. You would have made a fortune, Allan, if you had gone on the stage."

"All the world's a stage," said Dare, "on which every man plays his part. I am playing mine. I am fitted for nothing so well as this." He bade the chief good-afternoon, and wended his way to Mr. Morton's bank.

He found the bank about closing business for the day, and that many of the clerks were gone.

When Dare entered the bank the chief clerk called to him, exclaiming, "What do you want? Clear out!"

"Yes," said Dare, "when I am told to go by your master," and he eyed the clerk with his one orb as if he would bore him through. He did not like the chief clerk's looks in the least; he had a sort of hang-dog expression that was not reassuring.

"Give this note to Mr. Morton," said Dare, "and don't keep me waiting." He gave the order in tones so peremptory that the clerk did not hesitate to obey.

Mr. Morton, on reading the note, came immediately out of his private office; but, when he saw the curious-looking figure before him, he said, "There must be some mistake here."

"No, sir," said Dare, "there is no mistake." Then in a low voice he continued, "I am the detective sent to unravel the mystery of the robbery."

"Ah!" said Mr. Morton; "but why this unseemly disguise?"

"Because," said Dare, "I must never be known by any one, or else my occupation's gone. I ask you to humor me in this matter. I would like to speak to your chief clerk alone."

"What can you have to say to him?" asked the banker in surprise.

"Only do as I ask, sir, and you will see the good effects of it."

Mr. Morton looked askance, but the man's language was good, and he had the indorsement of the chief of police. He thought it strange that the man should want to see the chief clerk, but he called to the clerk, saying, "Mr. Mann, a person wishes to speak to you."

The clerk came forward, looking rather pale and shaky, which was perhaps not extraordinary, considering his late experience.

"A private room, bub," said the detective; "no one must hear us talk."

"In here, then," said the clerk, shaking all over, as he led the way to a small apartment. "What do you want with me?" he said.

"Want o' you?" said Dare. "Nothin', bub, but you wants suthin' of me. The boys leave for furren parts to-morrow, an' wants to see you at onst, to divide the swag."

"Hush, for God's sake!" exclaimed the trembling clerk. "I want nothing from any one. What do you mean by talking to me in this way?"

"You want your share of the job, don't you?" said Dare; "or will you compromise for ten thousand, and let me pay you on the spot? But you'd better see the boys at onst and get your share. They'll have to go abroad. It's gettin' too hot for 'em here."

By this time the clerk's teeth were chattering as if he were suffering from cold, and Allan Dare knew that he had his man.

"Step out as soon as it's dark," said Allan, "and see the boys, or they'll be likely to come and see you, for they ain't goin' to leave this without some security that you won't peach after they're gone."

"For God's sake, hush!" cried the clerk; "you'll ruin me. I'm ruined anyhow. What will become of me! What will they think outside of my being closeted with such a looking fellow as you?"

"I'm a veteran of Napoleon's army," said Dare, "and if anybody makes insinuations against me I'll smash his head with my crutch. Now take a pull at this here brandy, and when you come

out you won't have that ague-fit." He handed the clerk a pocket-flask, who speedily drank half a tumbler of raw brandy.

Dare now walked into Mr. Morton's room. "I have questioned your chief clerk, Mr. Morton," said he, "about some points, and he has satisfied me ; but, as it is getting dark, I will call again in the morning to continue my investigation. You may think my method a little singular, but I hope it will prove successful."

"But," said Mr. Morton, "you don't seem to have done much hitherto. Our police and detective system is the worst in the world."

"I agree with you, sir, but I have been connected with the New York police only a short time. I caught the thief who stole Mrs. Ruggles's diamonds the week after the robbery, and secured all the evidence necessary to send him to the penitentiary."

"If that's the case," said Mr. Morton "I have strong hopes that you will succeed now."

"Don't notice anything in the appearance of your chief clerk," said Dare, "and let him go to-night without any remark."

"Good heavens !" exclaimed Mr. Morton, "you don't suspect *him* ? Why, the rascals treated him brutally."

"Nevertheless," said the other, "please do as I ask you, and don't spoil my plans." So saying, he hobbled out of the bank and up the street, to where a covered wagon was standing, with a boy of about seventeen years holding the reins.

The old soldier got in the vehicle with little difficulty, notwithstanding his disability. "Drive on," said he to the boy, "and stand near the bank-door, so that, without being seen myself, I can see who goes out. You stand by to jump when I tell you, and shadow the man I am after. In the mean time I will unbuckle this strap and relieve my leg, which is a great deal cramped."

The wagon remained near the bank-door for half an hour, and Dare began to fear that his man had escaped. At length he saw through the crack in the curtain the person he wanted, and exclaimed to his companion, "That's the man coming down the steps, with a bell-crowned hat and camlet cloak. Follow him, and never leave him until you can identify the men he goes to meet."

The clerk stopped a moment at the foot of the bank-steps, and looked up and down the street. He then walked slowly to Fulton Street, and then more rapidly to Front Street, where he stopped before the sailor's boarding-house we previously had occasion to visit.

The boy was at the clerk's heels, never once losing sight of him, although the shades of night were rapidly falling over the city, the dingy lamps, even when lighted, seeming but to make darkness visible.

When the clerk reached his destination he looked all around him, and then suddenly darted in at the front door, but, quick as lightning, the boy was at his side as he reached the landing.

"Can you tell me," said the boy, "where I can find Joe Dobbs? I've a message for him."

"I don't know any such person," said the clerk.

"All right," said the boy, "I'll find him," and he went along the dark entry, looking at the doors, but all the time keeping close watch upon the clerk.

The latter knocked at the third door. "Come in," said a rough voice. And in went the clerk, closing the door behind him.

The boy was at the door as soon as it closed, and his eye was at the key-hole. He could see nearly everything in the room and hear most of the conversation, for the door was not very thick.

Two stout, sailor-looking fellows were playing cards at a table. "Hello!" said one, "here's old milksop come for his swag. Well, you are quick on the trigger, and no mistake. Well, old fellow, we've shipped for forren parts, and if you take a hand in the game I'd like to win a outfit from your share of the swag."

"No," said the clerk, "I never play; I've better uses for my money."

"Ah, yes!" said the other, "I know the milksop's a Sunday-school teacher; has a gal that teaches in the same school; walks out with her on the Battery Sunday evenin' with a prayer-book stickin' outer his pocket; picks up a hankercher some one has dropped, an' advertises it in the papers, with his name in big letters, an' all the people say, 'What a nice man!' Who'd suspect that you'd ever rob a till?"

"I have no time to talk nonsense," said the clerk. "I want my money. I have risked my life to help you, and I don't want to be kept waiting. I was sent here for it."

"Sent here!" said the man. "Who in thunder sent you here?"

"Why," said the clerk, "an old soldier—a Frenchman—a large man with only one leg, one arm, and one eye."

"Ah! I see," said the other, "the chief out on a lark. So he sent you! Well, he means business. Just you sit down and wait till

Ben the Joker comes in." And, looking at a huge silver watch, he said, "Ben'll be here in exactly half an hour."

The clerk sat down on a sea-chest, and the two men went on with their game. The boy at the key-hole started for the street and ran like a deer to Allan Dare's quarters, which he reached in about ten minutes, to find Allan waiting for him dressed as a drayman.

The boy quickly told his story, and informed Dare that the other man would be at the rendezvous in half an hour.

Dare wrote on a card, "Give the boy ten stout men, with orders to arrest those he points out."

The boy fairly flew to the police office, and, arriving there, found the chief just about departing for home. He gave him the card, and the chief summoned his assistant. "Ten good men at once. Is the van at the door?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"Then call the captain of the watch."

It was about the time when the captain of the watch came to get his orders for the night, and there were a number of policemen waiting about.

As the captain of the watch came in the chief said, "Take this boy for a guide; arrest those he points out. Don't let the driver spare his horses—quick, be off!"

In less than five minutes the well-loaded van was off at a rattling pace, and very soon stopped a short distance from the Front Street boarding-house, where they all got out.

The boy led the way, the policemen following, until he stopped at the door which he had seen the clerk enter. Loud and boisterous conversation was going on inside.

The captain of the watch forced the door open, and four persons stood revealed—one of them the clerk.

In another instant the candles were blown out, but the policemen crowded into the room and a scuffle ensued. Knock-downs were given and taken, and in the excitement policemen clubbed each other. The boy rushed into an adjoining room, the door of which had been opened by the occupant when he heard the noise, and seized a couple of lighted candles, with which he returned to the scene of action.

There he witnessed a bloody spectacle. Men were on the floor bathed in blood, while the three thieves were standing in a corner, wielding heavy clubs and bringing down a policeman at every blow. The clerk had crawled under the table.

When the light appeared, the outlaws made a rush for the door over the bodies of the prostrate policemen, and might have made good their escape but for a stalwart drayman, who at that moment appeared at the opening and laid the foremost villain senseless with a blow of his fist, caught the upraised club of the second and thrust him violently against the wall, injuring him so much that he could not move. The third man seemed to be appalled at the fate of his comrades, and the drayman, seizing him by the collar, clasped on his wrists a pair of handcuffs before he was aware of it. Then, turning to the police officer, he said, "Captain, take care of this fellow. The others need no one to take care of them just now."

He then hauled the trembling clerk from under the table, saying, "Come, bub, the swag ain't yourn yet."

"My God!" exclaimed the clerk, "I'm lost."

"Yes," said the drayman, "you are. And now, captain, if you'll allow me to advise you, I'd leave a guard here and see that nothing is touched until the chief of police comes. Now, I'll bid you good-night. If I happen to be in your neighborhood when you are having a scrimmage at any future time, I'll step in and lend a hand."

The captain, who was bleeding profusely from a blow received from one of his own men, managed to express his thanks, and added, "I only wish you had been here a little earlier."

The drayman went to a wagon stationed at a post near by, followed by the boy, who jumped upon the front seat and took the reins.

"To the police station," said the drayman. As soon as they arrived there the drayman walked into the chief's office, and was met by that functionary, who called out, "What do you want, man, and how dare you come in without knocking?"

"I dare anything, your honor," said the other. "My name is Dare."

"Ah!" said the chief, "sold again; and yet I might have known if I had thought a moment. I'm getting old, Dare, and you'll have to take my place."

"I couldn't be half as useful there as I am now," said Allan.

"We will make a good team in the end. I bring you news that will make your heart glad. The three bank robbers are all in the hands of the police, but in all my life I never saw ten men get such a drubbing as yours did from those three fellows. If I had not stepped in as I did the rascals might have escaped."

Allan Dare then gave the chief an account of the whole affair. "Now," said he, "keep the door of the room locked and the windows nailed down, and you and I will inspect the place to-morrow. I must get away before the policemen return, for I don't want them to see me. They think I am an angel who came to help them in their extremity. I will communicate with you to-morrow."

Dare jumped into the wagon, and was soon at his quarters.

"Now, Gabrielle," said he to the boy, "go home to your mother, get your supper, and keep a watch over Jane Ross. You've done well to-day. Here is twenty dollars; you shall have more hereafter."

"Thank you, sir," said Gabrielle as she drove off.

Allan Dare now prepared himself for a good night's rest.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE STRONG-BOXES.

THE news of the capture of the bank-robbers set New York all ablaze. The chief of police was more than rewarded for former censure by the glowing tributes of the press to his energy and ability. Hundreds of citizens called to congratulate him upon his late success. Every one felt that New York would now enjoy comparative immunity from thieving operations for some time to come. It was the popular impression that the whole gang had been captured.

The four thieves, after an examination before the recorder, were committed to await the action of the grand jury.

The morning after the capture of the robbers, the chief of police called at Allan Dare's quarters, and found him dressed as the Rev. Mr. Raymond.

"Dare," said the chief, "if I am seen associating with you in that rig I shall lose my reputation for consistency. People will say I am deceitful, as I have always been considered hostile to the clergy. I wish you would wear some other dress."

"Excuse me," said Dare, "but if you want to deceive people, put on the surplice. Most people, women especially, believe in the clergy, and this disguise of mine is very difficult to penetrate."

They stepped into a close carriage and were driven to the sailor

boarding-house in Front Street. They entered the room where the robbers had been captured, and the policeman in charge was directed to await orders below.

In this room were three miserable cot-beds, a pine table, three chairs, and three seamen's chests. The house was one of the places where sailors are taken in and swindled out of their hard-earned wages. One would hardly look for bank-robbers in such a place, or think the fraternity would dare to trust themselves in the hands of greater rascals than themselves.

There was nothing in the chests but seamen's clothing, and an examination of the walls, floors, ceiling, etc., afforded no evidence against the prisoners.

"It is evident," said Dare, "that the master-hand holds all the money, and for the present it is out of our reach. Let us have the landlord up, sir."

The landlord, who soon appeared, was by no means prepossessing in appearance, yet his testimony was straightforward enough.

It seems the three men had only been a week in his house, and claimed to have come from Philadelphia. They were well-behaved, paid their bills, and said they wished to sail out of New York, as wages were higher than in Philadelphia. They had shipped on board a vessel bound to Bremen, and had worked all that day getting in cargo.

"By heavens!" said Dare, after the landlord had withdrawn, "these are expert thieves; they have left no tracks, but their connection with the clerk will convict them."

The chief and Dare went away disappointed, leaving the boarding-house under surveillance of the police.

"What astonishes me most," said Dare, "is how quietly the rogues have disposed of their booty; but I'll find it yet. My force is too small, but in a week or two I shall have a couple of good detectives here who worked for me in Paris; then I shall get along better."

That evening Mr. Eton was reading from the paper additional particulars of the capture of the robbers to his wife, who listened with great attention.

"La, darling!" said she, "what a wonderful man the drayman, that knocked down the three robbers after they had killed all the police, must be!"

"No one was killed, Fanny; the ten policemen were whipped by the three men, that's all."

"Oh! is that all?" said Mrs. Eton. "Then I don't want to hear any more about it. I think the police ought all to be killed, because they haven't found my diamonds. It was easy enough for them to find that horrid old Mrs. Ruggles's diamonds and Mrs. Vandeusen's pearls. It would have been so interesting to see my name mentioned in the papers, telling how the diamonds had been found, and people would ask a thousand questions, and get me to show them the diamonds."

"Yes," muttered Eton to himself, "and find they were not set open. Fanny," he said, "if you whine any more over those diamonds I won't give you the set I have ordered from Paris. Haven't I told you that the house of Eton & Co. can stand the loss of a dozen sets like the one lost without minding it?" Considering the kind of diamonds they were, this was no doubt true enough.

"Ah, you dear old darling!" said Mrs. Eton, "you are too good to me, and I can't tell you how much I love you. I wonder Mr. Deville and Mr. May don't come to dinner. The soup is getting cold. You asked them to come at five precisely—didn't you, dear?"

"Yes," he said, "at five precisely." Just then the gentlemen in question were announced.

The dinner went off well, as Mrs. Eton's dinners generally did. Everything was well served, the conversation spirited, and Mr. Eton drank his sherry with so much gusto that his tongue quite ran away with him. He talked much about the robbers, and how he would like to see any of them try to rob *him*, stating that in his counting-house was a strong-box that would defy any burglar in the world.

"But," said Deville, "these are not ordinary robbers; they defy all the locks and bolts made in the country. I believe I have the only strong-box proof against fire and burglars in New York. I imported it from England. I don't believe in your American articles."

"I'll bet you ten dollars," said Mr. Eton, "that mine is stronger than yours."

"I never bet," said Deville, "but, if you like, you can examine mine and I'll examine yours, and Mr. May shall be umpire. If the decision is against me, I will give Mrs. Eton the handsomest supper the Maison d'Or can provide."

"Good!" said Eton, "and we'll examine the safes to-morrow."

After dinner the visitors excused themselves, as they had an engagement to attend the theatre.

When they were gone Mrs. Eton exclaimed : "You dear old darling ! don't you know that Mr. Deville gives the most beautiful suppers in New York ? If you lose the bet you will have to give a hundred-dollar supper."

"Pahaw ! Fanny," said Mr. Eton. "Why, I can buy Deville out. The house of Eton & Co. could pay for twenty suppers where he could pay for one ; besides, I don't expect to lose."

"I hope not, darling, for Mr. Deville is so vain about anything he has ; but I want my darling to have everything better than any one else. But remember, pet, if you should by any possibility lose, you must give a splendid supper for the credit of the house of Eton & Co., for it will be the talk of the town."

"You shall have it your own way, Fanny ; the house of Eton & Co. won't allow any one to excel it."

The next day at noon Messrs. Eton, Deville, and May went to Mr. Eton's counting-house to examine the strong-box. Mr. Eton unlocked the outer door of the vault, which was solidly built of granite. Inside this was a massive iron chest studded with locks and bolts, which Mr. Eton opened—also proud to display the wealth that was piled inside, which consisted of bales of bank-notes and bags of gold and silver.

"There," said Mr. Eton, "let the burglars get the keys of that chest if they can. I always carry them in my pocket." So saying, he locked the chest with a self-satisfied air.

"Yes," said Deville, "your strong-box is a very fine one, and probably secure against burglars, but you'll say mine is a better one when you see it."

"Then let us go and take a look at it," said Eton, "and, if I think it a better strong-box than mine, I will pay for the supper. But don't forget my additional security in the shape of a watchman, armed with a double-barreled gun loaded with buckshot."

"Mr. May will decide," said Deville, "and if I lose I shall pay for the entertainment with more than pleasure, for I have been wanting an excuse to ask Mrs. Eton to a supper for a long time."

They proceeded to Deville's bank, which was elegantly fitted up in a style before unknown in New York—mahogany counters with brass railings, and wire net-work to keep off thieves.

Deville's strong-box was inclosed in a brick vault with double doors of iron. It was a huge affair, covered with thick iron plates,

and reaching half-way to the top of the vault. Three doors opened into the box, which was divided into as many sections, separated by partitions filled in with asbestos, as a guard against fire. All three doors locked with a spring, but there was no key-hole visible by which they could be unlocked. No one but Deville himself knew the secret. He had an iron chest, of the ordinary pattern then in vogue, in which money was deposited for the current expenses of the day, of which his cashier kept the key.

"All very good," said Mr. Eton, "but you haven't a stone vault like mine to cover your safe."

"I have something better," replied Deville. "You see that large affair over the strong-box? Well, that acts like a candle extinguisher. It is made of the best iron, and no ordinary instrument can cut it. I have a little steam-engine that lowers it over the safe at night and hoists it up again in the morning. As it weighs four tons, no burglars would be likely to lift it off."

"Ah, yes," cried Eton, "but why can't the robbers get up steam and hoist it off?"

"Because," said Deville, "I set an alarm-clock at night before I go home, and any one who tampers with the cover will start an alarm that can be heard half a mile off. Besides, to guard against all accidents, I take off the cylinder-head from the engine, and my boy carries it to my lodgings every night, where I lock it up in an iron chest. I explain this to all my depositors, and I have more of them than any other banker in New York."

"I'm afraid I shall have to pay for the supper," said Mr. Eton; "but, Deville, my boy," slapping him familiarly on the back, "I can beat you in one thing. My safe has in it at this time more money than yours. The house of Eton & Co. can't be beaten there."

"If you will tell me what you have," said Deville, "and, of course, I'll take your word for it, I'll show you my accumulation."

"I have three hundred thousand dollars in that box of mine," said Mr. Eton, proudly. "Since that robbery of Morton's bank (by which I came near losing a large amount) I prefer not to trust my money in banks."

"But," said Deville, "no one lost a cent by Mr. Morton, and his credit is higher than ever."

"Humph! yes," said Mr. Eton, "but I didn't go back to him. Now tell me, Deville, honor bright, how much of your own money have you in your box?"

"I have over four hundred thousand dollars of my own in bank-notes," replied Deville, "seventy thousand in Erie Canal stock, sixty thousand dollars in gold, and six hundred thousand on deposit; and I can not tell you how many bonds there are belonging to other people."

The merchant opened his eyes in astonishment. "I always predicted," said he, "that you would be the leading banker in New York some day, and now I am satisfied of it." Mr. Eton now invited the two gentlemen home with him to luncheon, and, when there, told his wife of the wonderful safe he had seen, but said nothing about the money.

When the company had gone, Mr. Eton said to his wife, "Fanny, the house of Eton & Co. could buy Deville out in half an hour; he is all safe and brass railings."

"Yes," replied the fond wife, "no one could beat my darling at anything." Eton kissed her and went back to his strong-box and money-bags, while his beloved Fanny went up-stairs to write a note to Deville, congratulating him on his success over her old bear, and felicitating herself on the coming supper at the Maison d'Or.

Then she ordered her carriage and spent the afternoon in dawdling over store-counters, and bought a magnificent dress at Vandervoort & Flandin's in which to appear at the supper.

In the end Mr. Eton will find the promised supper an expensive entertainment, although, no doubt, he would maintain that the house of Eton & Co. could stand twenty suppers of the same kind without wincing.

CHAPTER XX.

AN INGENIOUS STRATAGEM.

THE "nine days' wonder" about the robberies began to subside, and the papers were anxiously looking around for something new.

Mrs. Vandensen and her daughter had been gone more than a fortnight, and Mr. Vandensen had received no news from them, so that he was beginning to feel uneasy. Mr. Faney, his chief clerk, shared his uneasiness, for he was very much attached to Miss Vandensen, who reciprocated the feeling. It was considered a settled thing in the family, and, now that the female portion were away, Mr. Frederic Faney stayed at the Vandensen house to keep the old

gentleman company, and discuss with him the prospective profits of the gas company.

It was the custom of this solid man of New York to breakfast at eight, to smoke his cigar, and then drive to his office in Maiden Lane—a long ride that gave the people an opportunity to look at and bow to the great enlightener, and gave him an opportunity to bow in return.

On the morning of which we write, Mr. Vandeußen and Mr. Faney were discussing the probable reasons for this silence of the wife and daughter, and expressing a fear that something serious had happened.

"Who knows," said Mr. Vandeußen, "but what they may have been taken ill on the road, with no one to help them—"

"Or capsize in a stage-coach and broken some of their limbs?" said Mr. Faney.

"Or that my daughter has been taken sick with measles, and is now in the hands of some country doctor—"

"Or," said Mr. Faney, "they may have fallen in with some agreeable gentlemen on the way and forgotten us." Here he groaned inwardly.

"I ought to have sent three or four carrier pigeons with them in a cage," said Mr. Vandeußen, "and then they could have sent us messages from time to time. The mails are so slow they take twelve hours to come from Philadelphia. If I don't hear very soon I shall put all my business in Mr. Birch's hands and start off to join them."

"I hope in that case you will let me accompany you," said Mr. Faney, "for, in case of an emergency, I could be very useful."

"Why, of course," replied Mr. Vandeußen. "I should as soon think of flying as leaving you behind. Who would I have to write for me, and make out my instructions to Mr. Birch? But it makes me nervous to talk about the matter. Let us go down to the office, and perhaps we may get letters. The mail will be here by noon." So they turned to depart, but not before Mr. Frederic Faney had looked in the glass to adjust the beautiful curling locks that Miss Vandeußen thought so much of.

Just then came a loud knock at the street-door, and the servant, who answered the summons, reported, "A gentleman just from missus, sir, wishes to see you at once."

Mr. Vandeußen rushed to the hall, followed by Mr. Faney, and there they found a tall stranger in a traveling dress. He was a

man of about fifty, with gray hair and wearing gold spectacles. In one hand he carried a leather valise and in the other a gold-headed cane. His appearance was that of intense respectability, although his dress was a little soiled with travel.

The stranger bowed low to Mr. Vandeußen—who would not bow down to so great a man?—and said, “I am the bearer of a letter from Mrs. Vandeußen, which she considered so important that she did not wish to risk it in the mail, to say nothing of the fact that you would get it some hours sooner if I brought it.”

Mr. Vandeußen tore open the letter that the stranger handed him and read but a few words, when he sank upon a chair, exclaiming, “My God, this is terrible! Eugenie is dying! What shall we do?” With these words he burst into tears.

“Not quite so bad as that, sir,” said the stranger, “although she was very low when I left, and Mrs. Vandeußen was obliged to stop at Cincinnati. The physician said that your daughter’s case is a very bad one, but I do not think he considers it hopeless.”

“How long were you coming here, sir?” asked Mr. Vandeußen. “Excuse me if I have failed to show you proper courtesy in not asking you into the parlor—but this blow has upset me entirely. Walk in, sir.”

“You need make no excuses,” said the stranger. “I can sympathize in the grief of a father; but if you wish to see your daughter alive you must hasten to her. I was seven days getting here, the roads are in such bad condition.”

“When does the steamboat start for South Amboy?” inquired Mr. Vandeußen.

“In one hour,” said the stranger.

“Here, James,” said Mr. Vandeußen to the servant, “pack my valise at once; put in clothes enough for ten days, and bring down Mr. Faney’s valise also. Make haste! we must be off immediately.”

“Shall I have time to stop for a moment in Maiden Lane to deliver a message at my office?” asked Mr. Vandeußen of the stranger.

“I fear not,” was the reply; “that would lose you your passage, and you would have to wait over till Monday, as there is no boat on Sunday, and you would lose the connection at Wheeling. No, sir, I fear it would never do. Your daughter cries for you all the time.”

“Then,” said Mr. Vandeußen, “let us be off. Frederic, write

two lines to Mr. Birch ; tell him to take charge, and say that I will write him from Cincinnati what to do in my absence."

The letter which Mr. Vandusen had received ran as follows :

"CINCINNATI, May 4, 18—.

"MY DEAR HUSBAND : Come to us as soon as possible, no matter what the sacrifice. Our darling Eugenie *is dying*, and I am almost broken-hearted. The journey was too much for the dear child. She sank under the fatigue, and I am now at an inn without a friend and without a comfort.

"I have intrusted this to a kind stranger, who promises to deliver it to you the moment he arrives in New York. He has been of great service to me. Oh, husband, hasten, or you will never see your dear child again !

Your heart-broken

"EMMA."

The stranger, whose name was Smith, offered to deliver to Mr. Birch the letter of instructions so hastily written, and his offer was gratefully accepted by the sorrowing father. "If ever you need a friend," said he, "don't fail to call upon me."

The horses were urged to their utmost speed, and Mr. Vandusen and his chief clerk reached the South Amboy boat just five minutes before she left the pier.

No sooner had Mr. Vandusen and his companion departed than the stranger followed in the hack which had brought him. At Grand Street he alighted and dismissed the hackman. He walked down that street until the hackman had got out of sight, and then returned to Broadway, and walked along that street until he reached the restaurant on the corner of Leonard Street. Here he ordered breakfast in a private room, and also materials for writing.

When he was shown into his room he took out the letter to Mr. Birch, which had been hurriedly sealed with a wafer, and, slipping a penknife carefully under the seal, opened the letter and read as follows :

"MY DEAR MR. BIRCH : I have just received the most painful news. My daughter is dying on the road, in Cincinnati. I must take this morning's steamer or never see her again. Take entire charge of the office until my return, and conduct matters just as I would. I will write daily when I reach my journey's end.

I have but a few moments to reach the steamboat, and must say
farewell.

Yours truly,

"H. VANDEUSEN."

After that the stranger finished a hearty breakfast, and, when the breakfast things were removed, he locked the door and sat down to write with Mr. Vanduseen's letter before him, written in the clerkly hand of Mr. Frederic Faney.

The stranger wrote as follows, copying the style of writing as if it had been his own :

"MY DEAR MR. BIRCH : Don't judge me harshly. I am compelled to leave. Troubles are culminating so rapidly that, did I not make my escape now, I could not do so at all.

"To-morrow the gas stock will be worthless, so I do you a kindness by advising you to sell to-day for what you can get.

"It will be of no use to try and find me, as no one knows whither I am gone. There's my house ; let them take that and pay themselves.

H. VANDEUSEN."

The stranger folded and sealed this precious document, put it into his pocket, and, taking his valise and cane, walked up Broadway to Maiden Lane and so on to the office of the Manhattan Gas Company, where some twenty people were assembled outside the door.

"What is the matter ?" said the stranger to a by-stander. "Why is the office closed ?"

It was one of the clerks who answered : "Mr. Faney, the head clerk, comes down every morning to open the doors. He is never later than half-past nine, and it is now after eleven. We are waiting for him to let us in. The president is always here by ten. I don't know what to make of it."

Then the stranger knew that Mr. Faney had carried off the key of the office in his pocket, and it would be necessary to pick the lock to enter the office.

"Here is a note," said the stranger to the clerk, "addressed to Mr. Birch. A gentleman asked me to leave it at the office as I passed."

"Mr. Birch went to Philadelphia yesterday," said the clerk, "and will not return for two days ; but I'll give him the note when he comes back."

So the stranger walked away, leaving the clerks waiting for Mr.

Frederic Faney, who by this time had doubtless discovered that he had carried off the office-key, and was not a little perplexed thereby.

The stranger now called a hack and drove to the house in Broadway just above Chambers Street, and, telling the driver to wait twenty minutes for him, jumped out, keeping his back to the driver and leaving his valise in the carriage. Had the driver seen his face he would not have recognized him, for the stranger's hair was now chestnut-color instead of gray.

The stranger went straight to the house of the Carroltons, where he found Flossy in the parlor, dressed in white muslin trimmed with lace, and with a bouquet of damask roses in her belt. Her beautiful arms were bare, while her wrists were adorned with the handsome bracelets Robert le Diable had sent her.

Flossy jumped up and ran toward him. "What do you think of me now, Mr. Robert? Aren't I lovely? aren't I a little kitten?"

"Yes," said Robert, "the loveliest kitten I ever saw. You will set all New York in a blaze when they see more of you."

"Oh!" said Flossy, "you ought to have seen my get-up. The other evening, when papa and I went out driving, the people all stared and looked after our carriage as we passed. I am sure they admired me. I owe it all to you for sending Madame Bobinet here with those beautiful dresses. I wore my carriage costume of camel's-hair cloth in pink, kilted skirt of *faillle* set to a lining of silesia, the overdress forming a shirred tunic opening away from the *tournure*, with a basque-waist pointed in front and square in the back, the sleeves finished with a *lingerie* of *crêpe lisse*. Only think! sixteen yards of *faillle* twenty-two inches wide, and six yards of cloth forty-eight inches wide, in that dress! Then around my neck the loveliest little white fur collar you ever saw, topped off with the cunningest poke-bonnet in the world, with a long ostrich-plume in very light blue and salmon-pink. And then my parasol—salmon-pink trimmed with Valenciennes—and light salmon-colored gloves! What do you think of all that? Papa said, 'Flossy, you will ruin me if you dress in this extravagant style'—when you sent me all my pretty things! I laughed in his face, and he laughed too."

So Flossy ran on, and would have continued to do so indefinitely had not Robert stopped her.

"I am satisfied, Miss Flossy," said he, "that you will look beautiful in anything you put on. I thought you a perfect picture the first time I ever saw you, but when you were dressed in all those

frills and furbelows you must have been enchanting. You shall put it all on for my benefit some day, and I will judge for myself. Order what you please from Madame Bobinet, and I will pay the bills. But now I want to see your father on private business."

Flossy tripped off to call her father, and Carrolton soon appeared with a pen behind his ear, for he had been writing in his bedroom, and bade Robert good-morning.

"How much gas stock did you buy yesterday, Mr. Carrolton?"

"Twelve thousand dollars' worth," was the reply.

"Well," said Robert, "get down to the street at once; there's the devil to pay in gas stock. By three o'clock it will be down to par; to-morrow you can buy it for thirty dollars a share. Now carry out my instructions to the letter. From how many brokers did you purchase yesterday?"

"From seven altogether," said Carrolton.

"Then divide the twelve thousand dollars' worth of stock into seven parts, and go to each broker and order him to sell your shares at once before the stock falls. Tell them that you believe the gas company doesn't amount to a row of pins; that the president has disappeared, and the vice-president can't be found; that the company's office is closed, and even the clerks can't get in. Leave the rest to me. Now be off, sharp, and see what a row there'll be in an hour or two. Sell out at the best price you can get, but sell anyhow."

With these words Robert disappeared. The hackman had waited in vain for his fare, but at last drove off, consoling himself with the dollar he had received and the leather valise left in the carriage, for, although he found it empty, it more than paid for his loss of time.

Shortly after Robert's visit Carrolton sought the office of Jacobs & Co., brokers, and said to them, "I want to sell my gas stock. What is the selling-price this morning?"

"132," said the broker.

"Then," said Carrolton, "you may have mine for 130."

"Done!" said the broker. "I can afford to take it at that price, as there are parties after it; but I think it will be higher to-morrow."

As Carrolton walked out of the office he said, knowingly, "Gas stock will never touch 120 again."

The broker laughed. "There's a fool for you," remarked he

to his clerk ; " he might have got three per cent more for his stock just as easy as rolling off a log."

Carrolton played the same game in each of the broker's offices where he had purchased the stock, but when he came to the seventh broker he asked but 128 for his stock.

" My God, sir !" exclaimed the broker, " you are shaving yourself terribly. Why, the stock will be up to 134 by to-morrow," and he looked at Carrolton as if he thought he must be deranged.

" Well, that's all I ask," said Carrolton. " I don't want to take advantage of you."

The idea of any one taking advantage of a broker was so good that the man could hardly help laughing in Carrolton's face. He made all haste to hand out the money and secure the certificates of stock.

When the transaction was concluded Carrolton remarked, " Mr. Shavem, you may think me green, but by this time to-morrow gas stock won't be worth thirty dollars a share." And he walked away.

" The man's crazy," exclaimed Mr. Shavem. " What in thunder can he mean ? Is it possible there's anything wrong about the stock ? Here, John," to the office-boy, " run up to the gas company's office and see if anything new is up."

The boy, glad of any excuse to get out of the office, went off at steamboat speed. Arrived at the gas office, he found a crowd assembled around the doors, which were still closed, while the clerks were quite unable to answer the questions showered upon them by the excited crowd.

" What's the office shut for ?" asked one. " Is there a bust-up, or is old Vandensen dead ?"

" I have a draft here," said another. " It must be paid before three o'clock."

" I'd break the d—d door down," said a red-faced, choleric-looking man.

" Has any one been to Vandensen's house to see if he is sick ?" inquired another.

" He and his chief clerk wouldn't both be sick at the same time," said another ; " and if the clerk could not come down and unlock the door, he could send down."

At that moment the cashier appeared, pale and breathless. He stated to two of the directors, who had come to the office, that while Mr. Vandensen was at breakfast a stranger called to see him, and, after a few minutes' conversation, he ordered his own and his

chief clerk's valises packed, and drove off with great speed to the South Amboy steamboat.

Then the crowd vociferated, "Break down the doors! Absconded with the people's money!" But by this time three or four constables were on hand, and the persons disposed to make a riot were overawed.

Just then a clerk came forward and said to one of the directors: "Here's a note, sir, from Mr. Vandeußen to Mr. Birch. It was left here about eleven o'clock by a gentleman."

"This is so important a matter," said the director, "that I will take the responsibility of opening the note." This he accordingly did in presence of the crowd, who looked anxiously on, for, although few held any gas stock, all thought themselves entitled to meddle in the business.

When the director read the note he turned white as a sheet, but, recovering himself by a mighty effort, he said to the crowd, "It's all right. Mr. Vandeußen and his chief clerk have gone to Philadelphia, and he sent the key to Mr. Birch, whom he thought would be at the office. That's all there is about it. Now, gentlemen, disperse quietly. There has been great excitement without any cause." Taking the other director by the arm, he said, "Let us go."

As soon as they were clear of the throng the first director said to his companion, "This is bad business; read that note. We must get rid of our stock as soon as possible, or we are ruined."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed his friend, "what a crash there will be! Think of what a reputation that man held in the community! Who can be trusted? Let's get into the street and see if we can save ourselves."

But there were sharp eyes in the crowd that had noticed the director's change of countenance, and among them were brokers. These persons communicated their doubts and suspicions to others, so that in half an hour there was a panic in the street. The directors soon found it impossible to sell any stock, as nobody wanted to buy.

The board of directors met, and remained in council until twelve o'clock that night. Mr. Vandeußen's letter to Mr. Birch was read and reread. The only conclusion that could be arrived at was that Vandeußen had absconded, and would probably sail for Europe to meet his family and enjoy his ill-gotten wealth without danger of molestation.

Among so many directors it was impossible for the letter to remain a secret long, and next day the substance of it was published in one of the papers. People forgot all about the late robberies, and could talk of nothing but the gas company, the stock of which was quoted nominally at thirty dollars a share, but with no buyers.

Yes, there was one buyer. A portly gentleman of about fifty, with a red face and a red nose, appeared upon the scene.

"I don't care," said he, "what Vandusen may have done, as long as he hasn't run away with the gas-works and the pipes. This panic is foolish; people ought to hold on and trust to the stock going up again."

"Now's your time to buy, then," said a broker to whom these remarks were addressed. "There are over a million shares in the market, and you can buy them for thirty dollars a share—a fall of one hundred and two dollars."

"How much have you to sell?" queried the red-nosed man.

"In half an hour I could collect perhaps twenty thousand shares."

"Then," said the other, "I'll help the stock to go up by taking five thousand shares at once at thirty dollars."

"But that wouldn't help it much," said the broker. "People wouldn't mind that."

"Well, give it to me at any rate?" said the red-faced man, as he wiped the perspiration from his bald head.

"For what name shall I say?" said the broker.

"No name," replied the stranger, "for if I turn out to be a fool I don't want any one to know it."

The transaction was soon completed, and the red-nosed man paid in certified checks the amount due, and received the certificates of stock.

"A fool and his money are soon parted," thought the broker.

The red-nosed individual went into another establishment and pursued a somewhat similar course, only he declared that he believed the stock would be up to sixty in ten days.

"I think very likely," said the broker, "but I have ten thousand shares for sale at thirty. Better buy, sir; it will run the stock up."

"Give me five thousand shares," said the red-nosed man, trembling with excitement, and sitting down so suddenly that the chair broke under him, letting him fall on the floor. The broker and his assistant helped him up. He paid for the certificates as before, refusing to give his name.

"That man's friends," commented the broker, "ought to look out for him. He must have lots of money. I hope he'll call often."

The red-faced gentleman kept on his course until he had bought thirty thousand shares—all the stock that was in the market—and then he disappeared; in fact, he was never heard of again "on the street." If the stock should now go up again to its original figure, he would clear over three millions of dollars—but this was not considered within the bounds of probability.

In the mean while the gas company's office had been entered by the aid of a locksmith. The clerks resumed their places, and the books were all laid out in the directors' room, in the presence of the assembled conclave.

Everything in the books seemed to be correct. Then the directors visited the banks, and found that the deposits there agreed exactly with the showing in the bank-books of the company. Where was the sense in this panic? There were nearly two millions of dollars to their credit, while the gas-works, pipes, etc., represented half a million more.

The letter of Vandensen's was the only thing that appeared against the company, and this had evidently been the cause of all the mischief.

Next day there appeared in the papers an exhibit of the affairs of the gas company, which, as far as figures went, was very satisfactory; but the editors commented on the fact that Mr. Vandensen, the president, and Mr. Faney, the secretary, had mysteriously disappeared, leaving a very extraordinary letter that did not agree at all with the rose-colored statements of the directors.

Mr. Vandensen and his companion, although they made the greatest exertions, did not reach Wheeling until the fifth day after leaving New York—such was the state of the roads.

Here Mr. Vandensen wrote to Mr. Birch and gave him an account of his journey, saying that he should go by steamboat to Cincinnati, and there hoped to find matters better than he anticipated when leaving home. He might even go to New Orleans. Mr. Vandensen said nothing about his wife and daughter, taking it for granted that Mr. Birch would understand it all from his former letter. He then gave some instructions in regard to certain contracts that would soon be completed, and added that he would write more fully from Cincinnati.

In a postscript he said, "Faney brought the office-key with

him in the hurry of his departure, but there is a duplicate which my steward knows all about, and no doubt he gave it to you."

The gas company had been going along very quietly when Mr. Birch, who had now returned from Philadelphia, got this letter, which bothered him almost as much as the forged document he had previously received. It was written in Mr. Faney's hand, and signed by Mr. Vandausen in his peculiar bold style. He compared the two letters, but could detect no difference. He had no idea what Mr. Vandausen could want in Cincinnati, and was forced to the conclusion that his poor friend had gone deranged.

The editor of the "Post" was of the same opinion, and published the letter for the benefit of the community, thanking Providence that the gas company was in such good hands, now that the honored president was laboring under temporary delusion. The paper spoke of the great loss that so many holders of stock had experienced by selling out without waiting for an explanation, but said nothing about the gentleman with the red nose, who had shown his faith in the gas company by gathering up all the stock he could lay his hands on.

Meanwhile, Mr. Vandausen arrived safely in Cincinnati, and hurried to the hotel, where he expected to find his daughter in a precarious condition, and was told by the landlord that the ladies had stayed at his house but one night, that both were in excellent spirits, and had taken passage in the Southern Belle for New Orleans.

Mr. Vandausen was thunderstruck. "Why," said he, "they left here on the second, and I received a letter, dated the fourth, from my wife, in which she said that my daughter was here in a dying condition."

"That letter was never written by your wife," said the landlord. "It's a hoax."

"Here's the letter," said Mr. Vandausen. "Frederic, isn't this Mrs. Vandausen's handwriting?"

"Yes, sir," said Faney; "but stop, sir—let me see. The words are more cramped than Mrs. Vandausen's—it's a forgery. I see it all now. There's some design in this—perhaps a plan to rob your house in your absence. I didn't at all like the looks of the man who brought the letter."

"Yet," said Vandausen, "he looked like a gentleman—but I see it all now. Frederic, we must get back as soon as we can."

The two gentlemen started for New York that evening, and, after six days' hard travel, they arrived at home.

When they rang the bell at the Vandeußen mansion it was answered by the steward, who was a most miserable-looking object. He had fallen away in size, his eyes were sunken, and he wore a wet napkin around his head. When he saw his master he fell back as if appalled. "Good Lord, sir!" said he, "we all thought you had committed suicide or something worse. And the way the papers have been abusin' you, sir, is scandalous."

"Abusing *me*, James!" exclaimed Mr. Vandeußen in astonishment. "What in the world can they find to abuse me about?"

"Why, sir, people came here and was goin' to pull down the house—all about them gas-works, and the gas-stocks is all gone down to nothink; and they said, sir, as how you'd absquonded with all the money, and I don't know what they didn't say. Oh! it's been dreadful, sir, and I've almost gone crazy."

"Why, mercy on us, Frederic, what can all this mean? Get us some breakfast at once, James, and let us get to the office as soon as possible."

When the two travelers, after a hurried toilet, came down to breakfast, they found a pile of newspapers. As James brought in the coffee he said, "It's all there, sir; you can read it as you eat, but it'll break your heart, as it did mine, to see how they've abused you."

They were too much horrified by what they read to have any appetite for breakfast. When the carriage was announced they entered it, and drove as rapidly as possible to the office.

Everybody recognized the stately carriage as it drove rapidly down Broadway, although its occupants were concealed by the curtains, and more than once stones were thrown at it, which, although they fortunately did no injury, sufficiently indicated the drift of public sentiment.

As Mr. Vandeußen entered the office the clerks all rose from their desks, and, as he passed into the private office, the vice-president met him with extended hand.

"What does all this mean?" said Mr. Birch. "Your absence has raised a terrible commotion. The stock for three days was down to thirty, and only after a careful investigation into the affairs of the company were the public satisfied that the concern was not bankrupt. It has now gone up to par, and there it will stick until you explain."

"Explain!" cried Mr. Vandeußen. "I left a letter for you when I went away, telling you that my hurried departure was owing

to my daughter's being in a dying condition in Cincinnati, and asking you to take charge of affairs in my absence."

"Here is the only letter I received," said the vice-president, handing the forged epistle to Vandeußen.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Vandeußen, "I never wrote this letter; it's a forgery, and a skillful one at that. I have another of the same kind, supposed to be written by my wife, telling me to come to Cincinnati."

It was evident enough that some one was interested in getting Mr. Vandeußen out of the city—for what reason, unless to injure the gas company, did not appear.

No time was lost in giving the newspapers all the necessary information, so that the evening issues contained a full explanation of the cause of Mr. Vandeußen's absence.

The true and forged letters were published, and Mr. Vandeußen stood completely vindicated.

Gas-stock began to climb up to the old figures, and everybody wondered why the stockholders had been so foolish as to sell out.

It was not yet understood what was the object in writing the forged letters, but it was noticed that, when the gas-stock approached its old figures, parcels of it were offered for sale, but who the sellers were nobody knew.

In the course of a few months twenty thousand shares were disposed of in New York, and ten thousand in Philadelphia and Boston. The matter was soon forgotten by the general public, but long remembered by the sufferers that had sold at thirty.

As for Mr. Vandeußen, he could be seen as of old riding along Broadway in his handsome carriage, leaning on his gold-headed cane and smiling blandly on the people who bowed to him. But, although the gas-stock had gone up, somehow or other the great man had not recovered his former popularity with the multitude.

It is astonishing how soon the general public forget the idols to whom they have been accustomed to bow. It was hard to disabuse the public mind of the impression made by Vandeußen's sudden disappearance, and many people still believed that there was something wrong which the company had hushed up to secure themselves against loss. It was darkly intimated that Mr. Vandeußen would soon be superseded by Mr. Birch, but for whose management in the late crisis the whole gas concern would have gone to the dogs.

"What do you think of all this, Allan Dare?" said the chief of

police to his friend, handing him the paper with the published letters. The chief had just stopped in at Dare's quarters to visit him.

"I think," said Dare, "that it was a scheme to rob the public, and is a part of the enterprises now carried on by a band of robbers. It's all fish that comes to their net, and the small robberies are committed merely to throw the police off the track. Do you know that when the gas-stock touched the lowest point thirty thousand shares were bought up by one man—a fat fellow with a red face and a red nose? The brokers say they would know him anywhere. I doubt it, though, for, after he had secured all the stock he wanted, no doubt his appearance changed very much, and he will never be seen again. Some of the same stock has found its way into the market again. Don't you think it worth while for a company of scamps to engage in a plot like this to make money? And it is such an easy way, although it could not be repeated. I have been on the watch and have picked up a good deal."

"Well, Dare, you look deeper into things than other people do. I think you must be right about this, although it never struck me before."

"I am convinced," continued Dare, "that a master-mind is at the bottom of all the strange things that have happened lately in New York—some one that holds a good position in society. If I am to catch these rogues I must hold a similar position, and you must obtain letters that will give me the *entrée* into the best society of New York, not as Allan Dare the detective, but as a gentleman of leisure—a part that I can play to perfection."

"I can arrange it for you," said the chief. "I know Mr. Eton, of Eton & Co., well; he has a charming wife. Then there's the Vandeusens, Mortons, and a lot of others. I'll give you a chance to become acquainted with the first families."

CHAPTER XXI

FLOSSY AND HER TRIUMPHS.

THE day after the meeting of the chief with Allan Dare, Robert le Diable entered the parlor where Flossy was sitting, surrounded with laces, ribbons, gloves, and all the *etceteras* which go toward

making up a woman's wardrobe. Flossy was getting ready for the spring campaign, and Madame Bobinet had sent her numerous patterns from which to choose an outfit. As she sat in an arm-chair with her gorgeous surroundings she looked as graceful as the lily bending over some silvery stream. Through the half-opened window-blind the sun poured his beams, a single ray lighting up the golden curls on her beautiful head. Her little heart fluttered as she raised her eyes and saw the reflection in the mirror opposite.

"I wonder," said Flossy aloud to herself, "if I am as beautiful as that? Or are mirrors like men—deceitful?—for the novels say that men *are* deceitful, though, goodness knows! none of them have ever troubled me with their compliments. Old popsy has always kept such a close watch over me that nobody has a chance to tell me I am pretty. I'm sure that handsome man, whom we met yesterday on the Bloomingdale Road with that beautiful lady, would give his eye-teeth to know me, and each of his eye-teeth are worth a diamond, for I never saw so beautiful a set of teeth as he showed when he laughed. Heigh-ho! why can't I know some of these handsome people? I never meet anybody but popsy and Mr. Robert—dear good man!—who gives me all these things from fairy-land, and carries Aladdin's lamp in his pocket. But then Mr. Robert is not handsome, although his figure would be splendid in a suit of broadcloth. But how he does look in that eternal gray suit, which he must have been wearing, by the appearance of it, at least four years! And then that ugly, tawny beard of his—it's enough to disfigure any man! He might as well not have any teeth, for no one can see them in such a mass of hair.

"There," she said, putting some silk patterns together, "I wonder how this would do—a reception-toilet of cardinal satin and satin plaided in Madras-colors on gold ground, false skirt of rose-silk taffeta with plaiting of gold-colored satin, finished by plaiting of red satin at the foot, a wide-plaited flounce of the plaided satin surrounding the skirt? If that isn't style then I don't know what style is. I should think even Mr. Robert would approve of that, bless his dear red nose! I wonder if he couldn't get something to prevent it from peeling? I wonder if he has ever been in love? I don't think the man has a particle of sentiment in him.

"There now"—twisting some silks together—"the silk laid in a succession of folds finished with a wide band, covered with a plaiting of the red satin, and draped over a square curtain of the plaided satin! Well, if that doesn't make Madame Bobinet stare

I don't know what will—though, no doubt, she will want to finish it off with ten yards of Brussels lace. Let her if she wants to.

"I wonder," continued Flossy, "if Mr. Robert knows the difference between Brussels lace and any other kind. I don't believe he does; he and popsy talk of nothing but gas-stock and cotton-bales. How I hate that kind of talk! If Mr. Robert would only talk to me sometimes it would be pleasant, but he sits and stares at me as if I were something strange."

Flossy was so taken up with her thoughts that she didn't hear Mr. Robert as he pushed open the parlor-door, which stood ajar. He had been for some minutes an amused auditor, and might have remained some time longer listening to her soliloquy, but just then she happened to glance at the mirror, and lo! reflected there she saw the gentleman of her thoughts standing, hat in hand, ready to pay her obeisance.

She gave a little scream, but, recovering herself quickly, exclaimed: "Oh, you dear old fellow! I am so glad to see you. I thought you were never coming back any more."

"Yes, Miss Flossy," said he, taking her hand, "here I am once more—red nose, tawny beard, and all—and ready to entertain you with gas-stock and cotton-bales."

Flossy looked surprised, but not abashed. "La me!" said she, "did you hear all that nonsense? Why, you must have been here for the last half-hour. The truth is, I have to talk to myself, as I have no one else to talk to. You can't expect a woman to sit still all day long and not wag her tongue. Why didn't you speak sooner?"

"To tell you the truth, Miss Flossy," said Robert, "I was looking at the most beautiful picture I ever saw in my life—you sitting surrounded by your silks and satins. It carried me back to the shadowy past, whose memories have almost become obliterated. I hope it may remain stamped on my memory as long as I live."

Flossy clapped her hands with delight. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "you are as nice as the man I saw in my ride. I am sure he could not say anything prettier than that. After all, you have some sentiment in you. Now come and sit by me, Mr. Robert. Don't ask for papa, and I'll tell you all about it."

"I didn't come to see your father," replied Robert, "but I came expressly to spend the morning with you, although you do think I care only for gas-stock and cotton-bales, and wear a coat that looks four years old."

"Now hush!" said Flossy, putting her hand over his mouth; "don't repeat any more of that. Listeners never hear any good of themselves; you should have remembered that. But now keep quiet, and answer my questions."

"I am all attention," said Robert. "The morning is all your own, Miss Flossy."

"Then," said Flossy, "first and foremost, popsy and I rode out last week in the beautiful carriage with a pair of bay horses, and a coachman in a drab coat, that you sent for us. I tell you I felt as if I were the equal of the Empress Josephine."

"So you were," said Robert, "the equal of any one."

"When we got out on the Bloomingdale Road," she continued, "we found lots of carriages filled with fashionable people, who looked at us as if we were something more than common. I think it was my salmon-pink bonnet with the salmon-tinted feather, for Madame Bobinet says there's nothing out this season to compare with it. Oh, it was so amusing! And popsy kept telling me all the time not to stare at people, but how could I help it when they were all staring so at me? It was so all the afternoon, drive where we would. We were going slowly up a hill when we met an open carriage coming down, with a gentleman and lady in it. They were talking gayly, but as soon as they got nearly opposite us the lady drew her companion's attention to me and I heard her distinctly say, 'Isn't she a beautiful little kitten?' There, Mr. Robert, was a compliment for you! The gentleman looked me through with his large eyes. He was the handsomest man I ever saw, and as for the lady, she was beautiful. I think they have been lately married, for she looked so lovingly at him with her soft blue eyes."

"What kind of carriage and what livery had they?" asked Robert.

"The livery," said Flossy, "was dark olive-green with silver buttons. The carriage was straw-color, and the horses two beautiful sorrels with flowing manes and tails."

"That," said Robert, "was Mr. Eton's turnout—a rich old merchant who keeps up all that splendor that his wife may flirt with handsome young men. He doesn't seem to mind it, however, and his wife is considered the prettiest woman in New York. The gentleman you saw with her was no doubt Mr. Deville, a banker who came here from Europe about two years ago, and is making a great deal of money in speculation, but who will probably lose it all before he is done. They say that Mrs. Eton keeps her sweetest

smiles for Deville, and all the women are crazy about him, although he has no eyes for any one but Mrs. Eton."

"Oh, I must know Mr. Deville," said Flossy, "just to see if he is as handsome close to as at a distance."

"That is easier said than done, Miss Flossy, until you get into society, and then, no doubt, he would soon be at your feet."

"And I must know Mrs. Eton also," continued Flossy, "she is so nice; and then it would be so lovely to cut her out. But I must tell you all. After they passed us they turned and overtook us before we reached the top of the hill, and the lady examined me from head to foot. She took me all in, as I did her, for I can tell you everything she had on. I don't think I ever saw anything more becoming than her collar trimmed with the finest point lace in two layers, tied in a square knot of wide cobalt-blue ribbon. And then her hat was a marvel of beauty—a perfect *parterre* of roses."

"Spare me a description of the lady's costume," said Robert, "for I could not take it in. What more did they do?"

"No more," answered Flossy, "for popsy got angry, and said, 'I never saw such impudence,' and he ordered the driver to whip up his horses and 'get rid of those impertinent people.' We soon left them behind, but yesterday, when popsy and I drove out, among the first we met were this same couple, and what do you think Mrs. Eton did? I could have scratched her eyes out! She had actually got a bonnet just like mine, and a white fur tippet the same as I wear. I'll never forgive her as long as I live. And as for Mr. Deville, he showed all his white teeth as he passed us, and actually had the impudence to bow to me. Did you ever hear of such a thing?"

"All of which, Miss Flossy," said Robert, "is a compliment to your charms. In less than a week every young lady in New York will be wearing a bonnet and tippet like yours. The most fashionable milliners will be overrun with orders, and you will be known all over the city. Mrs. Eton will call on you, and you will be all the rage, which I am sure will please you—for, poor child! you have had but a dull time of it so far, and getting you into the best society is rather out of my line. I am known only as a bold speculator on 'Change, and I am acquainted with but few members of the *haut ton*. You will find something in society far more interesting than the unsentimental Mr. Robert with his red nose, tawny beard, and ancient coat. But I hope you may be induced in time to for-

give me for being deficient in the qualities that distinguish Mr. Deville and his associates."

Flossy jumped up and grasped both his hands. "You dear old friend!" she exclaimed, "I'll never find any one that will take your place in my heart. You found me a poor, friendless girl, with scarcely a place to lay my head, and you have made me equal to a princess. You found my father in poverty, and have raised him to opulence. You have done more for me than all the world besides, and, as long as I live, I shall love you as a brother. I love your old gray coat and your tawny beard, and don't object even to your nose. You are full of honorable sentiments, and that is the kind of sentimentality I most appreciate. There, now," she continued, her eyes filling with tears, "that's how I feel, and that's the only way I know how to express myself."

"And that makes me happy," said Robert; "and, Flossy, you shall always be my little kittenly sister! But now I must take a brotherly leave of you, for I have much to do." Flossy offered her little rosebud mouth for a kiss, but Robert passed that by and kissed her gently on the forehead.

"Is that all a brother claims?" said Flossy, in a rather melancholy tone. "But I never had a brother, so how could I know?"

"It is all that I claim, Flossy; but as I never had a sister, how should I know? Good-morning, kitten." With these words Robert departed.

Flossy sighed, and then sat down again to her work of arranging her reception-dress. On the table lay three new bonnets; six pairs of gloves were also displayed—one, of a salmon-pink; another, pearl; a third, ashes of roses; fourth, cobalt-blue; fifth, corn-color; and a sixth maroon—to suit different dresses. The room looked as if the fairies had each left there some beautiful article for Flossy's toilet.

Flossy was in a morning costume—a dress of light-blue cashmere, trimmed down the front with Valenciennes lace, ornamented with bows of blue ribbon, the corsage cut square, the short sleeves trimmed with lace. Her feet were incased in blue satin slippers, and in her hair was a white tea-rose. Flossy was indeed a picture worth looking at, and fortunate would have been the artist that could have painted her as she appeared that morning.

Flossy had stood up for a moment to match some of her fabrics when there came a knock at the parlor-door. She absently said, "Come in," thinking it was one of the servants. The door opened,

and a beautiful young lady, fashionably dressed, entered the room. Flossy was so absorbed in her occupation that she did not notice who it was that had entered, while Mrs. Eton—for it was she—stood transfixed, looking at the beautiful girl in her exquisite pose.

"There," said Flossy, aloud, "I don't think Mrs. Eton will get a chance to copy *that*. It's stunning, and no mistake!"

"Yes, you lovely creature," said Mrs. Eton, coming forward, "it is beautiful, but not half so beautiful as you are in your present costume. I am Mrs. Eton, and I have fallen in love with you, like everybody else who has seen you, and have called to make your acquaintance. There's my card—Mrs. Job Eton. I don't like the *Job*, but my husband is as patient as the man mentioned in Scripture, and puts up with all my whims, so that consoles me. Now, Miss Carrolton," she continued, "we must be fast friends from this hour. No one shall monopolize you but me. You shall ride with me, dine with me, sup with me, and go to the theatre with me, and I shall chaperon you to all the balls and parties. Deville shall send you every morning a beautiful bouquet. You shall not know a weary hour from one year's end to another. I'll prepare your trousseau for you when you are married, for you soon will be, all the men being wild about you. There, now, what do you say to that?"

All this time, while Mrs. Eton was rattling on, Flossy stood looking at her in amazement, not being able to insinuate a single word. But, when the voluble lady stopped and seemed waiting for an answer, Flossy drew herself up loftily and said, "Why, Mrs. Eton, it is not ten minutes since I declared that you should be my enemy as long as I lived."

"Why, you dear child," cried Mrs. Eton, "what have I done to cause your resentment?"

"Did you not go and copy my bonnet the day after you saw it, when I only had one wear out of it, and when I had told Madame Bobinet not to make another like it?"

"You dear, sweet, innocent child," replied Mrs. Eton, laughing heartily, "is it for that you would destroy my happiness for ever? Why, you beautiful girl, if you treat me unkindly for that sin you will have to punish all New York, for there is not a fashionable girl in the city that has not ordered a bonnet exactly like yours, and whatever you wear after this will be copied immediately."

Flossy's eyes beamed with delight. "If that's the case," she said, "I forgive you, for I want to be the rage in the rôle of the sweet little kitten. That's what Mr. Robert calls me."

"And who is Mr. Robert, pray?" asked Mrs. Eton.

"Don't you know Aladdin with the wonderful lamp? He knows you, and told me all about you, and how much Mr. Deville was in love with you. Ah, you naughty woman, to let a young man be in love with you when you have a husband of your own!"

"You innocent darling," said Mrs. Eton, laughing; "but my husband is such a bear! I married him for his money and gave up Arthur Seabury, one of the handsomest young fellows about town, to take him. Job knows that, and he lets me do as I please. I flirt awfully with the young men, but I expect you will cut me out everywhere."

"Not with Mr. Deville," said Flossy, saucily, "for I am told he is always at your side."

"Humph!" said Mrs. Eton, "I am not so sure about that. But he is my property just now, and, until I tire of him, no one must lure him away. But, Flossy—I must call you Flossy, it's such a beautiful name—you must swear eternal friendship with me. I'll be your fairy godmother," and she kissed the young girl on her soft cheek.

"Oh!" said Flossy, "I'm quite in love with you already, for you are just as sweet as you can be. But I must know Mr. Deville too. What kind of a man is he?"

"Deville?" said Mrs. Eton. "Why, he is a perfect love of a man. The women all adore him, and even the men are infatuated with him. He is fast, though, my little friend, and might shock your notions of propriety. He gives suppers where the men go and play cards till daylight; he bets heavily at the races, and generally wins; he patronizes dog-fights and boxing matches, and I don't know what all. In my opinion, however, he is none the worse for all that. I don't like nice young men, who part their hair in the middle and teach Sunday-school classes—do you, darling?"

"I don't know much about them," replied Flossy. "I never knew a young man in my life, my father has always kept me so close. But tell me more of Mr. Deville."

"He is a thoroughbred," said Mrs. Eton, "and that means all that's noble. There's George May, who commenced by hating him and now adores him, notwithstanding his lady-love is head over ears in love with Deville, who doesn't care a cent for her. Finding the women all setting their caps for him, and thinking Deville rather young and inexperienced in New York society, I just took him under my wing and gave him good advice. I am his monitor; he

does nothing without consulting me, but he shall devote himself to you."

"Tell me," said Flossy, "about the girl that is in love with Mr. Devilla."

"Ah! Louise Morton! Well, darling, she is unlike anything you ever saw in your life. She is very beautiful, I must acknowledge. Her figure is perfect. Imagine a sculptor that had chiseled out of marble a perfect form and features, and then breathed the breath of life into his image, and you have Louise Morton. Her smile is like the soft ripple on a placid stream, and she has a voice like one of those fabled sirens that lured men to destruction. Her movements are grace itself, her beautiful face is full of expression, her lips are like rosebuds, and her ears like tiny sea-shells. Her hair is black as night, and she has such an abundance she doesn't know what to do with it. Her hands and feet are exquisite. What more would you have to make her a perfect woman? Yet with all this she is a devil, and the man who marries her will live in purgatory. When in repose her eyes are beautiful and soft, like those of a gazelle, but once thwart her in anything and they assume a cruel and cold, steel-like expression.

"The men all adore this girl of nineteen," continued Mrs. Eton, "though she is cruel to them all. George May is wearing his heart out for her, and she makes him think she cares for him, keeping him near her until she has made up her mind how she will dispose of him finally. As long as he serves to amuse her, or draw attention away from her other designs, she will keep him dangling about her. He is a dear, sweet fellow, with the face of an angel, and that woman will break his heart as sure as there is a sun in the heavens. So devoted is May to Deville that he would even give Louise Morton up to his friend, but he knows how cold Deville is toward all women. They say he left a love in Europe, and that there is a sad story about it, but I hardly believe the man's heart has ever yet been touched in that way. He seems cold as ice, and Louise Morton's fascinations have no effect. The fact is, my dear, I look after Deville and keep him on his guard."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Flossy, "how lovely it sounds—just like a novel!"

"Yes, dear," replied Mrs. Eton, "the poor fellow might be led astray if it were not for me. I make him breakfast with me every morning, and find out everything that passes at Morton's the day before. Of late he dines almost daily at Morton's, for you must

know he saved Mr. Morton from bankruptcy by advancing a large amount of money, which has not yet been repaid. I do believe Morton is trying to catch him for a son-in-law, for Deville is apparently as rich as Croesus and is the rising man in New York. He's a darling fellow, Flossy, and mind you don't lose your heart with him, for he is as cold as marble. I am the only one with whom he ever exchanges confidences, and I tell you, in strict confidence, that he is a little smitten with me. But he knows how devoted I am to my old bear, and he never presumes beyond kissing my hand or kissing me on the forehead. I don't mind him; I'm his godmother, you know."

"I don't like people to kiss me on the forehead," said Flossy. "That's not the place to kiss when one has a pair of lips. Don't you agree with me, Mrs. Eton?"

"You are right, Flossy," she replied, "but, for his own sake, I don't want Deville to know any more than he does about women. He would soon go astray if it were not for me."

"I must help you to keep him in the right path, poor young man," said Flossy. "I feel sorry for him, for, from what you say, I suppose he has neither mother nor sister."

"No," said Mrs. Eton. "I stand in the place of mother and sister to him. But, Flossy, you are rather too young for a mentor yet; you can look on, however, and learn. Mr. Eton gives a supper Tuesday evening at the Hôtel d'Or—a bet he has lost to Mr. Deville. All the *ton* will be there, and your father and yourself will receive invitations. Now, my child, I must leave you," and, kissing Flossy affectionately, Mrs. Eton floated out of the room.

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Flossy as soon as she was alone, "what a beautiful dream I have had! Isn't she an angel? and I was going to be her enemy. How kind she is to that poor Mr. Deville, who has neither mother nor sister! I wish he would take me for his sister, even if he did only kiss me on the forehead. Mrs. Eton and I could give him lots of good advice. Ah me! how beautiful the world is growing! This must be the paradise I have heard so much of."

Then gathering up her silks and satins, Flossy placed them all together upon the sofa with the remark, "Lie there, gorgeousness! I have gone through too much heavenly excitement for one day"; and away she flew to the adjoining room, where lunch was being served to her father, who had come in unobserved.

"Who was that woman, Flossy, you had in the parlor," in-

quired Carrolton. "You'll ruin me, child, with mantua-makers' bills; remember, I'm not a millionaire. That woman will charge you double for the manner in which she dresses. I got a glimpse at her through the sash-door, and she looked like a duchess, but when I saw all the rubbish on the floor I knew her for one of those confounded milliners."

Flossy screamed with delight. "Oh, you foolish old popsy, to mistake the rich Mrs. Eton for a milliner! Why, pop, she's the cynosure of fashion, and so nice that I have fallen completely in love with her. Do you know, she is going to matronize me to all the balls and parties, and she says I will be all the rage, and that all my dresses will be copied. I think when they see me in my plum-colored velvet, trimmed with black Brussels lace, with bonnet and ostrich-feathers to match, if the girls don't sigh then I'm mistaken."

"Flossy, Flossy," said her father, "did you ever hear the old adage, 'Give a beggar a horse and he'll ride to the devil'?"

"Thank you, sir, not quite that far, if you please. But I am going to-morrow to ride with Mrs. Eton and Mr. Deville, and I mean to give people something to stare at. And, popsy, they are going to have a grand supper at the Hotel d'Or—the Etons, I mean—and you and I will be invited. I am just so happy I don't know what to do with myself. We will get into good society at last. I'll marry a millionaire, and you can do just what you like. What a pity it is we can not take Mr. Robert with us; but he has such an awful red nose, and wears such unfashionable clothes! Besides, he wouldn't enjoy fashionable society at all."

"Stop, Flossy," interrupted Carrolton, "don't name Mr. Robert in the same breath with your New York fashionables. Praise your Mrs. Eton and your Mr. Deville if you like, but don't disparage the man that gives you your bread and butter."

This remark brought Flossy to a full stop, and the tears came into her eyes.

"You are right, popsy," she said. "I am an ungrateful little kitten; I don't care if I never see any of them again."

All that night Mrs. Eton and Deville were present in Flossy's dreams, but Mr. Robert never once appeared to her. When she arose in the morning she found a large paper box in the parlor, with a note from Mr. Robert that it was to be worn at Mrs. Eton's supper.

When Flossy opened the box she stood motionless with surprise.

The contents were from Madame Damascene, late milliner to the Empress Josephine. It included a dress worthy to be worn by a princess, made nearly all of the richest lace, to be worn over pink silk or satin. The sweetest little bonnet of lace over pink and lovely pink marabou feathers was in the box, with gloves and slippers to match, and a rich lace shawl. Everything was in keeping, and rich beyond what Flossy had ever conceived.

Two little leather boxes still remained unopened, and Flossy's eyes sparkled when two beautiful bracelets set with diamonds appeared in one box, and a tiny watch set in a Rhine-stone in the other.

"How did Mr. Robert know I was going to the supper?" she muttered. "I didn't know it myself when I last saw him. I do believe Mr. Robert is in love with me. No man would give a girl all those beautiful things unless he loved her. I hope not. I'd like him to be just my brother and nothing more. Oh, my! I could never stand that big red nose of his, and that sun-burned beard, and those old clothes—and I could never make him dress up. It's impossible to teach an old dog new tricks. But popsy would never speak to me again if I didn't marry him. Perhaps he'll pop the question next time he comes. If he does, what shall I do?"

Just then came a knock at the door, and Flossy, hastily thrusting her latest acquisitions into the box, called out, "Come in," and in walked Mrs. Eton and Mr. Deville.

Flossy looked at them in astonishment. She had never in all her life before seen such a handsome pair. It was like a dream to her to be in such company. Before she could recover herself Mrs. Eton had her arms around her, and was covering her cheeks with fashionable kisses.

"You darling," she said, "it seems ages since I saw you."

To which the simple Flossy answered, "Why, Mrs. Eton, it was only yesterday you were here."

"Isn't she charmingly innocent, Deville?" said Mrs. Eton. "But I forgot to introduce you—Mr. Deville, Miss Carrolton. I hope you will like each other. With you two as my *protégés*, every one in New York will envy me."

Devilie surveyed Flossy with a merry twinkle in his eye, while Flossy looked rather confused at first, her face covered with blushes.

Devilie thought that even the beautiful Louise Morton did not outshine Flossy in loveliness. Mrs. Eton watched him closely to

see what effect Flossy's appearance had on him, and pouted a little when she saw him watching intently her every motion.

Mrs. Eton did not stay long, although Flossy exerted herself to be agreeable. She was charmed with Deville's French accent and his quiet manner. I fear Flossy was like all the rest of the young ladies—in love with Deville at first sight.

Mrs. Eton's object in bringing Deville and Flossy together was to have an attraction at her house, to draw Deville away from Louise Morton. She had read Flossy like a book, and thought she could manage to keep her and Deville from being alone together; but she would find it is as easy to stop a mountain torrent as to prevent two people who like each other from coming together.

When the visitors arose to go, Flossy gave them each a hand—a *gaucherie* she would get over in time—which Mrs. Eton pronounced native innocence. But Deville held her little hand for a moment, and looked intently into the depths of those soft blue eyes, which drooped beneath his gaze. As Mrs. Eton went out of the door Flossy heard her say to her companion, "I hope you know now the color of her eyes!"

Flossy watched them from the window, and saw Deville hand the lady to her splendid carriage, and then, bowing respectfully, walk toward Broadway.

"That," said Flossy, flinging herself upon the sofa, "doesn't look as if he was much in love with her. I hope he isn't. I never saw so handsome a man. What a beautiful French accent he has! I'm sure pop wouldn't want me to marry Mr. Robert if he only saw Mr. Deville. Oh, I couldn't stand Mr. Robert's red nose and tawny beard after seeing Mr. Deville. I know I shan't eat a mouthful of dinner to-day. O Mr. Robert! why don't you get a coat like Mr. Deville's, and wear kid gloves? How my heart beats! I don't know what I shall do." Talking thus to herself, Flossy fell asleep on the sofa, where her father found her when he came home to dinner. She woke up, and ate as heartily as if she had never seen Mr. Deville.

Mr. Carrolton listened quietly as Flossy's tongue ran on talking about her visitors. He saw that his daughter must go into society, and consoled himself with the thought that a new world was also opening for him, in which he might better his fortunes. He was making his way slowly but surely in his present vocation, but that did not satisfy him. He longed to be able to launch into speculations that were open to men of means, whom he saw daily making

large sums of money on 'Change. He was now but the paid agent of another man, who held him to a strict account and had him completely in his power. Carrolton felt that his employer was more than liberal toward him, yet he knew that his eye was constantly upon him, and that he could only make on his own account just what he was permitted by Robert.

Carrolton a month before was grateful beyond measure for the favors heaped upon him, but he had now almost forgotten the fact that he had been raised from the most abject poverty, and was even prepared to sacrifice his employer, if it seemed his interest to do so. Carrolton had all his life been a needy adventurer, and had betrayed the interests of his employers in every situation in which he had been placed. He now thought he saw an opportunity to advance his daughter's interests and his own, and he determined she should take advantage of it, and mingle in the society which centered all the wealth and power of New York.

He paid little attention to Flossy's remarks while she was rattling on about the charming Mrs. Eton, and descanting on the fashionable appearance of Mr. Deville, when suddenly he was struck by a remark of Flossy: "Popsy, if Mr. Robert were only a gentleman I think he would be almost as fine-looking as Mr. Deville, but he could never really be as handsome; and then he hasn't any style. The fact is, popsy, Mr. Robert wants polishing up."

"Flossy," said her father, "I have been listening to your childish nonsense for the last half-hour. Here you are not a day old in society, yet you undertake to judge of the merits of the only two men you ever spoke to in your life; one of them you have seen for a few minutes, and the other perhaps a dozen times. Let me caution you about being too premature in your judgment in such matters. I have been seriously thinking whether it would be wise in me to permit you to embark in the whirlpool of fashionable society, until your judgment becomes more mature."

"Why, popsy," cried Flossy, "I am engaged to drive with Mrs. Eton and Mr. Deville at four o'clock, and I think my judgment quite enough matured for that. You don't mean to say I can't go?" Here Flossy pouted, and looked so pretty that her father's heart relented.

"No, puss," he said, "I don't intend to deprive you of a single pleasure. Your life has hitherto been one of privation, and you have borne it all without a murmur; but I expect your pleasure to be tempered with moderation. You have no mother to guide your

footsteps, and I don't know that I am justified in letting you enter society under the auspices of Mrs. Eton, who, as far as I can learn, is a perfect devotee of pleasure."

"Why, you foolish old popsy, you wouldn't want me to come out under the auspices of an old woman who would mew me up and deprive me of all pleasure. No, thank you, sir. I would rather jog along as I am. And, popsy, I do think you might trust me a little. Why, who knows but what I may be of some use to Mrs. Eton? If I think she is a little fast I will give her good advice, and, popsy, I intend to tell you everything that happens and everything that is said to me, as I have always done, for I could not keep a secret from you."

"There are secrets, Flossy," said her father, "that girls do not even intrust to their mothers. It would be better for young girls if an unrestricted confidence existed between them and their parents, which would prevent them from going to strangers to confide their secrets. If there were more home confidences fewer domestic affairs would afford scandal to the inquisitive. But I shall look after you myself—not to watch you, but merely to advise you in matters where your own judgment may fail you. I have heard of young women who considered their fathers were acting as spies over them, simply because they gave them good advice in regard to their actions, and inculcated the necessity of preserving such decorum in society that even the most carping could not find a flaw in their armor. I hope you will never think, Flossy, because I am interested in your welfare, that I am keeping a watch over you. There's another thing, Flossy. I shall think it very strange if Mr. Eton fails to leave his card on me. You can tell the Etons I am agent for purchasing cotton for a house in London."

"Is that quite respectable, popsy?" asked Flossy.

"Respectable, you little goose!" said Carrolton. "Of course, it is highly respectable. It might not be if I only bought a few bales, but to buy thousands of them is quite another matter. I must give you one caution, Flossy, in your intercourse with the world—that is, to keep a close mouth and never jump too suddenly to conclusions. You made some comparisons between Mr. Deville and Mr. Robert, our benefactor, not at all complimentary to the latter, although I am certain that Mr. Robert is as far superior to Mr. Deville, in all that goes to make a man, as a diamond in the rough is to a highly polished Rhine-stone."

"La, popsy!" said Flossy, "how can you say so when you never

saw Mr. Deville, except that glimpse of him you got in the carriage?"

"Yes, I have seen him often," replied Carrolton, "and I discovered nothing in him superior to Mr. Robert. He has a jaunty air, wears fine clothes, is worshiped by the young men for his expensive suppers, and is no doubt leading most of his friends to the devil."

"Oh, popsy!" exclaimed Flossy, "how can you say such shocking things? What do you know about him?"

"Mr. Deville is living on the way," continued her father, "while Mr. Robert spends his time in making money, and gives away thousands of dollars to the poor. Your great weakness, Flossy, is jumping too quickly to conclusions. I will tell you a fable that you must remember whenever you are thrown into the company of strangers. There was once a little mouse who was brought up in strict seclusion by its mother, who did not wish it to come in contact with the world of mice until it was old enough to distinguish the difference between true and false friends. As soon as the young mouse was old enough to run about she wanted to accompany her mother in her excursions, and paid no heed to the latter when she told her she would not be able to escape if hard chased by their enemies. 'Besides, my dear,' said the mother, 'you must not go into the world until you are old enough for me to point out to you the dreadful foes that menace our race. There are hundreds of them, and worst of all the cat, from which we can not escape if she once lays eyes on us. But be a good little mouse and rest quiet until I return from foraging.' The mother had no sooner departed than the young one began to peer out of the hole, and the world looked so beautiful that, forgetting her mother's admonition, she determined to see something for herself, and scampered off as fast as her weak little legs would let her. Some chickens gathered around to watch the mouse's antics, remarking to each other, 'I wonder if her mother knows she's out?' and a large cat stealthily approached, which the mouse perceiving, ran toward it, attracted by its beautiful fur and general benevolent aspect. The old hen, anxious for the safety of her brood and having no confidence in the cat, ruffled her feathers and clucked angrily, and a cock crowed so lustily that the mouse fled in terror to its hole, which she fortunately reached in safety, although nearly frightened out of her wits. 'Oh!' said the little mouse to her mother, 'I saw a most beautiful animal with lovely eyes, soft fur, and long whiskers, and was just going to play with

it when a terrible monster covered with red feathers ran up and uttered a dreadful roar, which so frightened me that I ran home.' 'The beautiful animal that you saw,' said Mother Mouse, 'was the cat, the deadly enemy of our race, and if it hadn't been for the coming up of the honest cock you would have been killed and eaten, without a doubt.' Now, Flossy, I hope you will remember that story and profit by it."

"Why, you foolish old popsy!" exclaimed Flossy, "I knew you meant me all the time; but you needn't be alarmed; you'll see that I can paddle my own canoe. I'll show you that I am no foolish little mouse. But now I must go and get ready for my ride. You will have Mr. Eton and some other big swells calling on you before you know it." Kissing her father fondly, she flew up-stairs to dress, singing "Comin' thro' the Rye."

At four o'clock Mrs. Eton's elegant carriage arrived, and Flossy, who was waiting, hastened to receive her visitor. As soon as Mrs. Eton saw Flossy she broke out into rhapsodies.

Flossy was dressed in a plum-colored velvet and black lace, trimmed down the front with a lighter-colored satin ribbon in bows. On her head was a gypsy-bonnet almost covered with pink feathers, with a fall of Brussels lace around the edge. Around her neck was a white tippet. She carried a white muff and salmon-pink parasol, and wore salmon-pink gloves.

"If you are not the most beautiful thing in creation I don't know what beauty is," exclaimed Mrs. Eton. "Why, you will set the whole town crazy. But come, Flossy dear, I have two beaux to-day—George May and Deville. If you don't lose your heart with May you never will. He is the sweetest thing alive."

"No doubt," said Flossy; "but there are so many of that kind in New York, I can't fall in love with them all. But I must introduce you to my father," who at that moment entered the room.

"Happy to know you, Mrs. Eton," said Carrolton, "and to thank you for your kindness to my darling child, who is quite a stranger in this country, and misses her friends in England."

"We consider it an honor to have her," replied Mrs. Eton, "she is such a joy; and what a treasure you have hid away here, Mr. Carrolton!" and she gave him the tips of her fingers. "Why, the child is a perfect poem—a vision of delight. Excuse me, Mr. Carrolton, if I monopolize her; but no one else will be allowed to take possession of her but me. Mr. Eton will call on you at once,

Mr. Carrolton ; but now we must say *au revoir*, for everybody will soon be on the drive"; and, nodding gracefully, she tripped off, carrying Flossy with her.

"La, Flossy!" she said, when outside the door, but loud enough for Carrolton to hear, "what a splendid, aristocratic-looking man your father is!"

"No wonder he looks aristocratic," replied Flossy, "for his ancestors came over with William the something ages ago."

"That is splendid. William the Conqueror you mean! Why, Eton dotes on the English aristocracy."

The two gentlemen stood at the carriage ready to hand the ladies into it. Mrs. Eton introduced Flossy to Mr. May, and Mr. Deville respectfully raised his hat.

"To the drive, John," said Mrs. Eton, and off dashed the spirited horses, while the footman nearly broke his neck in climbing to his station.

"This is lovely," said Mrs. Eton, "and, since we have our little club together, let us enjoy ourselves. Flossy, Mr. May is one of my chums, and you must like each other. George, did you ever see anything quite so tantalizing as this little rose?"

"No," said Mr. May, "I don't think I ever did—if Miss Carrolton will not think it flattery in me to say so," and he seemed to devour her with his eyes, when Flossy knew that he was thoroughly in love with Louise Morton.

As for Flossy, she was quite bewildered at being in company with two such handsome men, so different in style—one a splendid herculean specimen of an olive complexion, the other of a slighter though manly build, light complexion, golden hair, and blue eyes—the face of an angel, if such an expression can be applied to a man's countenance.

Flossy gazed furtively at both her new acquaintances, while Mrs. Eton rattled away, engaging them in conversation, and giving Flossy a chance to study them at her leisure.

"Both splendid," said Flossy to herself, "but it is like the beauty of the Newfoundland dog in one case, compared with that of the more fragile greyhound in the other. If I were offered my choice I wouldn't know which to take. I wonder what Mr. Robert would say if he could see me now; but what matters it to me? One is in love with Mrs. Eton, the other with Miss Morton, and they don't give me a thought."

Flossy was mistaken. Both the young men were dying to have

a talk with her, for both thought her the most charming little puss they had ever laid eyes on.

At last May found an opportunity to ask her how she liked America, and Flossy, who had kept quiet longer than she liked, broke into rhapsodies.

"Like America?" she said; "why, I adore it. Everything here is so bright and lovely—so unlike smoky old England, where the sun hardly ever gets a chance to shine. I hope to live and die here, and never go back to a country where the—"

Here it suddenly struck Flossy that she was not exactly following in the course marked out for her by her father, and she blushed in the most charming manner.

"I am quite of your opinion, Miss Carrolton," said Deville, "in regard to the English climate, although the natives generally think it the best in the world."

"At all events," said May, "it produces the most beautiful complexions in the world."

Flossy was grateful to Mr. Deville for coming to her rescue, and grateful to May for his pretty speech, which she felt was intended as a compliment to herself; but she had come very near speaking of her early life before strangers, and she kept a guard upon her lips after that.

The barriers of reserve once broken down, the party kept up a continual flow of conversation. The new acquaintances were delighted with Flossy's *naïveté*, and she was delighted with their kind attention in explaining everything they saw, and pointing out to her all the distinguished people they met on the road, who seemed quite as anxious, from their looks, to know who Flossy was as she to know them.

Three times she had been seen on the drive—twice with her aristocratic-looking parent, and now riding with the rich Mrs. Eton, the banker Deville, and the handsome George May, the latter seeming quite enamored with her.

They passed the Mortons' carriage at a point where for a moment they came to a standstill. Flossy's eyes danced when she saw Louise. "Heavens!" she muttered, "what a beautiful creature, and what a superb turnout!" Louise, though she saw the party, and doubtless heard the remark, never deigned to look that way or notice Mrs. Eton's bow.

"She is the most beautiful being I ever beheld," said Flossy as they drove on, "but I wouldn't own such cruel eyes as those for

all the money in the world." Then, remembering that George May was said to be desperately in love with Louise, she blushed, and fell back in the carriage, and could not be made to talk until they nearly reached home, when she made a faint effort to be agreeable. A damper had, however, been put upon the party by Flossy's unlucky speech, and it was just as well the ride had nearly come to an end.

As they drew up at the door of Flossy's house Mrs. Eton said, "Remember, you breakfast with me to-morrow at eleven, and Mr. Deville and Mr. May will do the same."

"I shall be delighted," replied Flossy as she tripped toward the house, escorted by Mr. May, who begged permission to call for her next morning and escort her to Mrs. Eton's.

"I shall be too delighted," she said; "and it is so good of you after my making that silly speech about Miss Morton's eyes."

"You said what was true," replied May, "for she has at times the severest look out of her eyes; but when she is in good humor they are as soft as those of a gazelle. If she only had your eyes, Miss Carrolton, she would be perfect."

Flossy laughed and flew up-stairs, where she found her father, and gave him a glowing account of her ride, omitting, however, the speech she had made about Miss Morton's eyes.

Thus ended this delightful day, in which Flossy had realized more than she had ever dreamed of in all her life. A new world had opened before her, in which she saw vistas of never-ending happiness, with no thought that any storm could arise to overshadow it.

It had been a warm day, the last of April, and the long, gloomy winter seemed to have come to an end. The first flowers were springing up, and the birds were already singing their lays as if in praise of the great Creator.

Sweet thoughts spring up in April, and as flows the sap through the veins of the thriving tree, so flows the blood through the veins of youth. All nature speaks of love; the tree, late stricken to the core by the wintry blasts, prepares to put on its summer garment. The whole earth begins to teem with insects, and its barren spots to be covered with a verdant carpet.

In April love begins to bud like the trees and flowers, and, as Flossy sat at her window that night, drinking in the soft and balmy atmosphere, her youthful pulses had more than their wonted beat, and her rosy cheeks were more than usually flushed with the excitement through which she had passed that day.

She had never seen any man so handsome as Deville ; she had never dreamed of one so perfect as George May—yet, ten to one, she thought neither of them would give a moment's thought to her after she was out of their sight. One was in love with Miss Morton, the other with Mrs. Eton, so her papa had told her, yet she had heard that men were fickle and fond of change. "Why may not these two change to me?" she thought. "What a triumph that would be!" and with that consoling thought she closed her window-blinds, and in a few minutes was fast asleep, wandering hand-and-hand with George May in the land of dreams, or sailing over some placid lake in a gilded boat with the handsome Deville.

Could either of them have seen Flossy in slumber, with her golden hair hanging over her white shoulders, and her rounded arms lying in youthful grace above her head, it is likely they would have dreamed more of her, and less of the peerless Louise Morton.

Angels hovered over the couch of the beautiful girl, and sunrise came like delicious music to rouse her from her refreshing slumbers.

CHAPTER XXII.

MIDGET.

SINCE we last heard from Allan Dare he had not relaxed his efforts to ferret out the vermin that were infesting New York, and carrying terror to peaceful households.

As if by preconcerted action, all robberies of any magnitude had ceased, the depredations now being confined to a lower order of villains, whom Allan left to the care of the regular police force, which had been reorganized on a plan suggested by him to the chief.

The force were now fully awake to the importance of making a reputation for themselves, and, under the immediate direction of English Charley, were nightly capturing some clumsy law-breakers.

Allan Dare had been joined by two assistants, who had worked under his direction while he was a member of the detective force in Paris. Both were excellent detectives, and both spoke English fluently. One was called Pierre Tormenteur (the ferret), the other Jacques Belette (the weasel), and both agreed admirably with their

names. They were wiry fellows, of great nerve and strength, and untiring energy, who could assume almost any disguise with little fear of detection. Their arrival in New York was only known to the chief of police and to Allan. English Charley was often astounded when the chief of police would tell him of a burglary or street robbery, give him all the details of the affair, and tell him where to find the perpetrators. The worthy Briton began to think his superior was in league with old Clootie himself, but it was Allan Dare and his two associates that discovered all the culprits.

Dare was not, however, satisfied with catching the small fry. He knew that the larger game had only temporarily retired for the storm to blow over, and bided his time waiting for the great robbers to reappear on the scene.

He one day stopped at the eating-house of Hans Hammel, and found that worthy attending to three or four seedy-looking men that had called in to get luncheon.

"Can you give me a mug of good beer, my friend?" asked Allan.

"Goot peer?" said Hans; "vell, I dosh not shell pat peer, ant how long vos it since dot I vos your frent? How yer vos any how? Put you ish a fine-loogin' man vot might knog der house down. Put dam't a pit of goot or pat peer yer git here, pecaus, by tam, I doshen't shell it."

Allan walked out, having seen what he wanted. He had taken Hans Hammel in thoroughly. In him he felt satisfied he had the key to all the great robberies, and he kept him under the constant surveillance of Belette and Tormenteur.

One day the latter came to Allan Dare and said: "I have tracked Hans Hammel to his den in West Street, North River, where, under the name of Jacob Moses, he keeps a junk-shop that is, I am convinced, a receptacle for stolen goods. I find that he is an escaped convict; he was convicted eight years ago of burglary, his alias then being Abe Jacob. He has grown very fat since he escaped from the penitentiary."

"All right," said Dare, "continue to shadow him, and let me know if he makes any signs of leaving the city."

Dare then called on the chief of police, and asked him to obtain the loan of the gold snuff-box that had been stolen from Mr. Edmunds by Abe Jacob. The chief called on Mr. Edmunds, who readily granted his request, informing him at the same time how the box had been stolen by Jacob, and of that worthy's escape from

prison. Then for the first time the chief understood why Allan wanted the box.

When Dare had the box in his hand he said : " This is worth a dozen detectives, for it secures a most important member of the great gang."

Coles, who robbed Mrs. Ruggles, and the three men that robbed the Morton bank, were still in jail waiting trial at the next term of court. Jane Ross was still under surveillance of Gabrielle, but, as the gang was for the present quiet, Jane seldom went out of doors.

One day, when Gabrielle called at Allan Dare's house to report progress and receive instructions, he asked : " How is your brother ? Is he improving any ? "

" Yes, sir," she replied ; " thanks to your bounty and the kind physician you sent to attend him, he is quite well, though looking thinner than ever."

" Send him to me at once," said Dare, and Gabrielle departed. In less than half an hour the boy reported himself to Dare.

" Well, Midget," said Allan, " are you ready for an adventure, and do you feel well enough to bear any kind of exposure ? "

" Yes," said the boy, " any exposure that another boy can stand."

This youth was a remarkable-looking person. He was thirty-six inches high, and weighed about as many pounds. He had just recovered from an attack of typhoid fever, and had rather a cadaverous expression of countenance. His age to a casual observer would seem not more than eight years, but he was really sixteen.

Midget was not one of those atoms that add no weight or light to creation. He was intelligent, and could speak both French and English fluently. His strength and activity were wonderful. He could climb like a squirrel, was a capital actor, could throw his limbs out of joint, and disfigure himself so as to excite the pity of all who beheld him ; he could be deaf, dumb, and blind, when it suited him, and could run like a greyhound.

One can imagine how valuable Midget, with all these characteristics, would become in the hands of Allan Dare.

" Midget," said Allan, " there is a German named Hans Hammel who keeps a low eating-house in Pine Street. He is under suspicion, but it's hard to detect him in anything criminal. He keeps no servant, does his own cooking, and serves his guests himself. I want this man shadowed down to the finest point, only don't let him suspect you. The plan is for you to obtain employment with him, and never, if possible, let him get out of your sight.

When he is asleep for the night come and report to me, but never otherwise."

"I understand, sir," said the boy. "You shall know all about him soon. I will manage to become a necessity to him." And Midget bade his employer good-morning.

Midget's first move was to obtain a whisky-barrel, minus the head, which he filled with straw. He then procured a padlock and dog-chain, and, boring a hole in the barrel, passed one end of the chain through and fastened it inside with a staple. He then trundled his property on a wheelbarrow down to Five Points, where he locked the chain to a cellar-grating, close to a barrel of the same kind occupied as a residence by one of the street-gamins. This barrel was to serve for Midget's sleeping-quarters in case of necessity.

While Midget was engaged in preparing his domicile a rough-looking man emerged from a drinking-shop hard by and sang out, "Halloo, bull-pup, what yer doin' there? Off with yer, unless yer ready to pay up handsome for groun' rent."

"How much, colonel?" said Midget, respectfully. "I am ready to pay anything reasonable."

"Why, you darned little rat," said the ruffian, "you put on as many airs as a millionaire."

"Yes, colonel," replied Midget, "I have a house of my own, and that's about as much as any millionaire has; and if I don't like the climate I can move my residence to a more agreeable one—that's what a millionaire can't do without going to the expense of keeping two houses."

"Well, Mr. Tom Thumb," said the ruffian, "how much kin yer afford to pay down?"

"Well, general," said Midget, with dignity, "considering the advantages of the situation, and the chance of making agreeable acquaintances, I will pay your own price."

"Well, Goliath, can you afford fifty cents a month? If that's too much, you must move on."

"O Lord!" exclaimed Midget, "that's heavy. Why, I only paid two shillings a month at the corner of South and Burling Slip. But you have the advantage of quiet here in the morning, while there the carts commenced rumbling by four o'clock; and you know, governor, a fellow wants some sleep after sitting up all night drinking wine and eating terrapins."

"Hang your cool impudence! Pay up an' I'll pertect yer to the extent of fifty cents' worth, but look out and keep the premises

clean, or I'll lick yer as sure as my name's Bill Sucker." With this threat he walked back to his drinking-shop.

Midget, after looking the chain that held his barrel, trundled his barrow back to his home, then disguised himself thoroughly and proceeded to Hans Hammel's eating-house.

When Midget reached that place he found the worthy proprietor in the act of washing a lot of dishes that had accumulated during the morning—a task that was evidently not congenial to him.

"All tsee tam tishes ter vash," he said, "unt only twenty-five shents brofit all ter mornin'. Mein Gott! its enuff ter gill an elerphunt, unt ther boss vont leff a feller av a elp—dunder unt blitzen, vot vor in ter name uv all dat's goot dit Hans Hammel effer ship in sush a pizness? Vot fur I nod got a frow ter vash ub ter tishes? Vy, pecaus ter tam vomans kan't keeb ter segrets, and has sush tamt long tongues. Vell, I musht go ter vork, fur der kom-pane will shoon kom in"; and Hans began to put the dishes in the tub.

At that moment an emaciated object, begrimed with dirt and clothed in rags, appeared at the door. "I say, general," said Midget, for it was he, "can't you give a feller a job?"

Hans Hammel stared at the boy in astonishment. "How you vas now?" said he. "Mein Gott! dot feller vants a jop. Vell, I should dinks so. Vot kind ov er jop vould a larsh man likes you vant? Do yer dinks yer cud move er spiter-web or lift er chaw terbaccer off der floor? Mein Gott! Mein Gott! vot a choke it ish. Dosh yer mudder know yer out, mein ging of shiants?"

"No, governor," said Midget, "I ain't got no mother nor father nor sister nor brother, and no relations. I'm an orphan, and haven't had nothing to eat for so long that my belly and backbone are rubbing together."

"Vell, mein Gott!" said Hans, "never I see a petter liar, an' er firsht-glass liar at dat. I don't perliet sush an small sprat haf any packpone, ant yer pelly ish no pigger ash a flea. Vere dosh yer lif, ant vot dosh yer do fer a liffin', an' how olt mite yer pee? Gest please ansher dot."

"I work on odd jobs for a living, general. I live in a barrel in Grub Alley, at Bill Sucker's bar-room. I'm eight years old, and if you want to know about my character before you hire me, Bill Sucker'll give me a first-rate recommendation."

"Who tolt yer I vos a goin' ter embloy yer, yer tamt liddle

blatterskites? Cum in ant vash dose tishes ant den I'll dalk mit yer."

"All right," said Midget, who commenced to wash dishes as if that had been his usual employment; and in a short time the dishes were washed and wiped dry, while the glasses looked as if they had been polished.

"Vell done!" said Hans Hammel, who sat looking at Midget while the perspiration was running over his Jewish face. "Yer a firsh-t-glass liar unt no mishtake, bud if yer dond bede ter tyfie mit yer vashin' dishes I'll knog unter! Vot ish yer name, bup, ant how mush vill yer asksh py der month? Dunder ant blitzten, ter boss would kill a feller ash dishoeyed orters."

"My name is Tom Thumb," replied Midget. "I only want my victuals and drink, and half a dollar at the end of the month if I suit you."

"Ter teufel!" said Hans. "Why, dat ish all I gits; but den vare vill yer shleep, Mishter Dom Thum, vor yer shan't spent der night vrollickin'?"

"I can sleep in my barrel in Grub Alley, under Bill Sucker's protection."

"No! no! dot'll neffer do; yer musht stay here, an ven I goesh oud I kin log yer in ter dake care ov dish house."

"But I can't lose my barrel, general, after living in it three years."

"Neffar mint der parrel. I'll go loog at him meinshelf. Yer stay here ant scrup up dose floors vile I go ant see him." And Hans put on his hat and walked out, locking the door behind him.

Midget at once went to work and scrubbed the floor; then he scrubbed the tables and cleaned the windows; and under his efforts the place soon acquired a neatness that it never possessed before. He also took an impression in wax of the front-door key-hole, and also of the door leading into the room at the head of the stairs, formerly mentioned as the place where the burglars entered. He even descended to the subterranean tap-room, and took impressions of all the locks of the doors there.

Meanwhile Hans Hammel, ever suspicious, determined to find out all about the mite, whose talents for washing dishes had extorted his admiration. Hans had been strictly enjoined by the leader of the gang that made his house a rendezvous, never to have any one in his employ, so that outsiders might not get a clew to what was going on. The leader was afraid that his well-planned combina-

tions might be upset by some one not bound by the rules of the secret society and not standing in awe of its penalties. A dull fellow in the employ of Hans Hammel might tell things without knowing their importance; therefore Hans had been directed to have no one in the house. He had the place rent free, and all the profits, besides other perquisites.

But Hans was getting old and lazy, and he had a particular aversion to washing dishes. He had been pondering for a long time how to remedy the evil, and the advent of Midget made him come to a conclusion. "Mein Gott!" said Hans to himself, "one liddle fly like dot poy kin do nopody harm."

Had Hans Hammel been aware of the new combinations at work for the capture of thieves in New York he would not have admitted an angel into his den had one presented himself; but he had formed a contempt for the police force, and took little trouble to conceal his past offenses, trusting to the great change that the past few years had made in his personal appearance.

He was walking as rapidly as his obesity would permit toward Five Points, and was thinking how he would thrash the life out of "dot liddle vorm" in case he had deceived him. At last he found the entrance to Grub Alley, and Bill Sucker's grog-shop, the proprietor of which was standing in the doorway. Two barrels filled with straw were chained to the iron window-frame of the area, on one of which the name of Tom Thumb was conspicuous.

"Your name ish Pill Shucker," said Hans, accosting the grog-shop keeper, "and dosh you know dot poy Dom Thum?"

"What in the hell business is it of yours what my name is, you infernal greasy Jew?" answered the amiable Mr. Sucker. "I want you to understand that ere boy is under my pertection, and if you meddle with him I'll break every bone in your ugly carcass."

"Bud, my goot shentlemans, I pegs pardons. I shust asks a shimple question, ant I'm not a damt Chew. I'm as goot as you—vot you wash, anyhow?"

"I'll tell you 'vot I wash' if you don't clear out," said Bill, and with that he knocked Hans's hat over his eyes, and then, administering a vigorous kick in his rear, he propelled the old fellow up the street.

With Hans Hammel discretion was the better part of valor, and, as soon as he could get his hat from over his eyes, he made haste to get out of reach of the irate Bill Sucker. He cast no "longing, lingering look behind" until he reached the end of the

block. There he thought he saw Bill Sucker getting ready to follow him, and, we regret to say, Hans Hammel started to run as well as his big body would let him, and was soon in a place of safety.

But Hans had found out what he wanted, or thought that he had, and, not caring to learn anything more about the boy, made the best of his way home.

When Hans opened the door Midget was apparently fast asleep on the hearth. Everything in the room had been scrubbed clean, while none of the provisions left by Hans had been disturbed by the half-starved Tom Thumb.

"Mein Gott!" said Hans, "vot a shewel of a poy! He will safe me a fortune; he's worth his weight mit cold. Here, Dom Thum, wake up, my child, ant get some tinner. Eat as mush pread unt putter ash yer pleashe."

Midget opened his eyes and smiled when he saw Hans Hammel. "Oh," said he, "I am so glad to see you! I was a gittin' lonesome like, and was so hungry I had to go to sleep."

"Vy the teuffle didn't yer eat some er dot pread unt putter?"

"Because," said Midget, "it wasn't mine, and I had no right to touch it, even if I were starving."

"Mein goot Gott!" exclaimed Hans, "vot a fine poy! Vell, ve shall get along joost like soap mit water. Ant now, Dom Thum, joost you eat so mush as you can hole and keep yer pelly from rubbin' agin yer packpone. You shall shleep to-nide on a goot liddle ped py der fireblace until six o'clock in der mornins, unt den set der taples." And so Midget found himself installed in Hans Hammel's eating-house much sooner than he expected, and Allan Dare was encircling his game with his nets, using the simplest means, which were generally the best to bring about what he desired.

Allan Dare spent a good portion of the day and night in roaming over New York, to familiarize himself with every locality, while Belette and Tormenteur were scouring the city and its environs, taking notes. Sometimes they got on a wrong trail, and then they would break off and try something else. Sometimes they would be startled with the result of their observations. Many curious coincidences occurred, leading them to believe with Allan Dare, that their game was not confined to the ordinary criminal class, and they never saw any well-dressed persons in the streets late at night without giving them particular attention. This led them to notice a mystery they could not solve. On several occasions they had shadowed men at night to Pier 28, North River, where

they took a boat and proceeded toward Jersey City. One night they saw as many as ten men in the course of an hour leave Pier 28, and, although they watched all night, they never saw the men return.

On one occasion Belette and Tormenteur took a small boat and pulled from the Battery along the piers in the North River. About 8 P. M. a four-oared boat passed them, and when at some distance ahead they pulled up, in hopes of seeing the boat land at Pier 28. But they were disappointed, as the boat passed on, and, laying on their oars, the detectives fancied they heard the sound of the oars pulling out into the stream, so that they feared they had frightened their quarry.

Every event was carefully noted and reported to Allan Dare, and Midget, who was allowed to go out once a day for an hour to play, went to his employer to report everything that occurred in Hans Hammel's house. Allan had skeleton keys made from the impressions of the locks furnished by Midget, so that the latter could roam over Hans Hammel's premises whenever his master went out. But Midget was cautious and patient, and he determined to find out all Hans Hammel's ways before he took any further steps.

A day or two after Hans employed him, Midget went down to Five Points and brought his barrel up to the saloon. He begged Hans to let him sleep in it, as he had slept there so long that he couldn't feel at home in a bed, and Hans consented. "Goot liddle poy," said he, "he shall av all ter intulgence he vants, ant shall shleep mit his parrel ven he liksh !"

Hans rather liked the idea, for, in case any of the emissaries of the boss should come in at night, they wouldn't notice the barrel in the corner, while Midget felicitated himself in being able to watch Hans from his barrel without the other noticing him.

Midget would begin to yawn and look sleepy about eight o'clock, and Hans would say, "Go to shleeps, goot liddle poy ; shleeps maksh yer grow, ant yer got ter make up for loss times." And then at eleven o'clock Hans would put on his coat and hat and go quietly out, locking the door after him. Midget would watch him from the window to see if he lingered. Hans, however, seemed to have no suspicion of Midget, who had completely deceived him. He usually returned about two o'clock. Twice Midget followed him, and ascertained that he went to a low dram-shop in South Street, and, after drinking until he was tired, staggered home again. Allan considered this merely a ruse to throw people off the scent,

and Belette and Tormenteur kept him under surveillance in his newly found resort.

Thus Allan Dare was daily progressing in his plans and making his approaches nearer to his game. He had picked up a good deal of intelligence in his wanderings, which he kept entirely to himself.

The burglars and street-robbers had been comparatively quiet since the great robbery of Mr. Morton's bank, and the gigantic swindle that had caused such excitement among the stockholders of the gas company. No clew had yet been found to the perpetrators. Small parcels of the stock had been disposed of in the principal cities, but the amounts were too small to attract much attention. The brokers did not much trouble themselves in the matter, for they thought it no concern of theirs that foolish people should part with their stocks for a mere trifle. The man that had purchased the largest quantity of stock was unknown, and had never been seen since his grand operation. Allan naturally suspected he was a disguised man, and paid particular attention to all the large-sized men he encountered.

The chief of police was all this time in a happy frame of mind. He had regained the confidence of the public, and saw his police system gradually perfecting under the auspices of Allan Dare. The New York newspapers now spoke of New York as the best policed city in the world, although it was hardly a fortnight since the robbery of Mr. Morton's bank. The sleepy old constables and watchmen were still retained, for it was impossible to get rid of them, and the real improvement consisted in the fact that Allan Dare, Belette, and Tormenteur were constantly perambulating the city, gaining information and throwing a few crumbs to English Charley, out of which that worthy made considerable capital.

The three detectives had to acknowledge to themselves that the party for whom they were laying nets were the most adroit thieves they had ever come across, for they left no tracks behind them.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LOUISE MORTON.

MR. MORTON, the banker, seemed to have recovered from the heavy losses by the robbery of his bank, and was pursuing the even tenor of his way. It was not generally known that Deville had so generously and munificently come to his assistance. Deville was not a man to mention such a thing, and Mr. Morton would naturally not say much on the subject. But, as over a month had passed, Deville thought he would call and see if Mr. Morton could, without being embarrassed, let him have a portion of the amount advanced.

Much to Deville's surprise, he found that Mr. Morton had not been very generously treated by his old depositors, many of whom had not returned to him. Among them he mentioned Mr. Eton, who not only withdrew his own money, but advised all his acquaintances to withdraw from "that purse-proud aristocrat Morton, whose bank had no solid foundation, and who hadn't sense enough to select a chief clerk worthy of confidence."

"For my part," Mr. Eton would say, "I have a strong-box that the burglars can't get into, with a watchman, armed with a shotgun, on guard day and night." He'd like to see the burglars try it on. He hadn't any double back-action contrivance with an extinguisher on top and a steam-engine big enough for a North River steamboat—not he. As to Morton and Deville, the house of Eton & Co. could buy them both out twice over. Every merchant should be his own banker. All of which amused the public very much.

Mr. Morton expressed much regret to Mr. Deville at not being able to do without his deposit for a few days longer, and Deville, glad to oblige him, agreed to let the money stay until such time as Mr. Morton could do without it. It placed Mr. Morton under deeper obligations to him, and made him certain of obtaining the father's support in carrying on his suit with the daughter—although Deville felt that it would be dangerous to let Louise suppose that any man depended on her father to urge his suit. Louise, as it has been observed, was a woman that would carry out her own ideas, despite the wishes of her father or any other person.

The evening after his interview with Mr. Morton, Deville repaired to that gentleman's mansion, and was warmly received by

him and Mrs. Morton, the latter, as well as Louise, having been informed of Deville's noble conduct.

Louise, however, received her admirer with considerable *hauteur*. It was wormwood to her to have her father rest under an obligation to any one, and it was an additional mortification to her to know that James Deville was the man to whom her father was so deeply indebted.

"O papa," she had said the day before, "to think that a great banker like you should be indebted for help to a small banker like Mr. Deville! I would have sooner died than accepted his aid—a man of whom nothing is known, as I have heard you say."

"Yes, Louise," replied her father, "you would have died sooner than have accepted aid—until you happened to want it. If I had been overwhelmed by my creditors and you had happened to want a new frock, you would have been very much put out if it had not been forthcoming."

"Yes, papa, I should. We require certain things that we may make a proper appearance in society. In finding me in dresses you do no more than Adam did for Eve when he plucked fig-leaves for her to wear. My necessities are similar to those of Eve, only it is not the custom in New York to dress in fig-leaves."

"How absurdly you talk, Louise!" said Mrs. Morton; "you seem to be in a bad humor this morning, and disposed to be disrespectful to your father."

"Yes, mamma," answered Louise, "I know I am always ridiculous. I am told so often enough to remember it. Nevertheless, I am sorry papa is under obligations to a *parvenu* of whom, as he says, no one knows anything. This freak of generosity on Mr. Deville's part will make him more stuck up than ever. I'll seize the first opportunity to take him down."

"Louise," said her father, "it seems to me that you try to devise all kinds of reasons for acting crooked and contrary."

"Yes, papa."

"And seem desirous of working yourself into a temper because Mr. Deville has helped me, as one banker should another."

"Yes, papa."

"And you persistently quote words I made use of before I knew anything of Mr. Deville—before I had any idea he was the largest banker in New York."

"Do you mean in size, papa?"

"And before I knew his worth," continued Mr. Morton ; "but such conduct as his marks the true nobility of man."

"Do you think he is a prince in disguise, papa ?"

"He is the equal of any one in New York in wealth, education, and refinement, and I desire that he shall be received in this house as my most intimate and closest friend."

"Shall I have him shown into your sanctum, papa, when he comes—for I know you only receive your most intimate friends there ?"

"No, my daughter," he replied, sternly, "I expect Mr. Deville to be warmly received by all my family. My house must be open to him at all times."

"Not my boudoir, papa ?"

Mr. Morton was so vexed that he could hardly restrain himself, so he arose and went into his sanctum.

"Louise," said her mother, "you have vexed your father very unwarrantably. It is very disrespectful in you to go on so. You might make our house such a pleasant one, if you would only curb that cynical temper of yours and try to be agreeable."

"Yes, mamma," said Louise, and coolly walked off to the piano, where her rich contralto voice soon filled the room with its delicious harmony ; and the fond mother forgot, in admiring her child's accomplishments, the vexations to which she and Mr. Morton were so often subjected.

When Mr. Deville entered the room that evening Louise had not forgotten the scene of the evening before, and was prepared to receive him with her coldest expression. After paying his respects to the parents, he went over to where Louise was sitting, apparently engaged on a piece of embroidery, and wished her a pleasant evening ; but she scarcely deigned to notice him, except by saying, "My pleasant evenings depend upon whether any one comes in whom I like particularly." With this she resumed her embroidery.

"I have no doubt," said Deville, "some one will come in whom you like better than you do me, but until then I hope you will permit me to try and enable you to pass off a half-hour."

"By the way," said Louise, carelessly, "who was that milk-maid-looking girl I saw you riding with in Mrs. Eton's carriage the other evening ? That ridiculous woman is always patronizing some strange-looking creature, and thrusting her into society."

"That was Miss Carrolton, a young English lady," said De-

ville. "Her father is in the cotton business, and Mrs. Eton has taken a great fancy to her. She is very pretty and refined."

"Do you call that girl pretty, Mr. Deville?" said Louise, with one of her steely looks. "I have a Paris doll up-stairs that is far prettier. How long is it since you took to admiring milkmaids?"

"I didn't say that I particularly admired the young lady," replied Deville. "I never saw her but twice in my life. My ideas of beauty are of a different kind," he said, looking fixedly at Louise.

"Yes," she replied, "of the Hottentot kind, or that of the wild Indians of the West."

"You pay yourself but a poor compliment, Miss Morton," said Deville, "if you have failed to perceive what my idea of beauty is. I am sure I have expressed it often enough."

"Really, Mr. Deville, I take so little interest in your affairs that I have never noticed what your tastes were. It is a matter of perfect indifference to me."

Her tone was so severe and her manner so indifferent, that Deville's first impulse was to walk away and seek the more congenial companionship of Mrs. Morton, but he prided himself on his self-possession, and he never let any one see him become disconcerted. So he smiled and said, "Why, really, Miss Morton, I do not think it would be a matter of indifference to most young ladies, to know that a gentleman admired them more than anybody else in the world."

Her steel eyes relaxed somewhat their coldness as she answered: "That depends on whom the man is. Those sweet nothings are the small change which you men distribute to silly girls in society, who are no doubt glad to get it; but for my part, Mr. Deville, such flimsy compliments weigh very little. I like a man who is full of contradiction and perverseness, and one who would even be a little rude to me at times. My looking-glass tells me I am what is called beautiful, and I know myself what my mental qualifications are. I think if men were sterner and harder our sex would appreciate them more."

"I can not be what my nature forbids, even to please Miss Morton," said Deville. "Nature has made a fitting compromise in man. To the powerful she gives an amiable temperament, otherwise they would dominate over the weak."

"A bullet would soon settle the balance of power," retorted Louise, "and I am told that large men are apt to be cowards. Now

there is George May ; he is not a large man, but I believe he would dare anything on earth."

"Yes, dear fellow, he would," said Deville, "while I, Miss Morton—"

"You ?" said Louise, indifferently ; "why, I never thought of you, although it is said you are not wanting in courage, and the men are all fond of you, which is, I suppose, the reason why you are not a favorite with women." This she said sarcastically.

"You are a great admirer of Mr. May," she continued. "What can you see to admire in one who is so entirely different from yourself, and who has the effeminacy of a woman ? He ought to have been a girl, and he would have been just such another milkmaid-looking thing as that Miss Carrolton."

The conversation had been carried on in so peculiar a manner, with ill-temper on one side and forbearance on the other, that it struck Deville as rather ridiculous, and he could not help laughing, while Miss Morton went on unconcernedly with her embroidery.

Checking himself, he said : "Excuse me, but I could not help it. We seem to be playing at cross purposes this evening. You spoke of my admiration for George May. Yes, I love him better than anybody else in the world, except one, and that one is not to be mentioned."

"That one, I suppose, is the young lady you left behind in Europe ; or perhaps she is a married woman, for you seem to have a weakness that way."

"Perhaps," he said ; "but my love for George May can never change, for I know he will always be the same devoted fellow to me, but bad treatment from a woman might change my love."

"You had better advertise that fact, and then the dear creatures would always be lavishing their smiles, so that you wouldn't take fright and run away."

"Ah !" said Deville, "it is well that man through the rough and tumble of life learns resignation and patience. It is with these two weapons that he conquers more than by an indomitable will. Two things in the world are much alike—the human heart and a millstone. They are driven round and round, and, if they can not find anything to grind, they must be ground themselves. Why is it that women love to grind the hearts of those who love them ?"

"I suppose," said Louise, looking up, "you consider women the millstones."

"Sometimes, Miss Morton, they are very grinding ones, and

crush all the soul out of a man. Yet, what a heavenly existence is that where woman steals like a balm into the wounded heart! The hardest heart could not withstand the magic smiles that ripple round her lips. Yet, how hard and relentless are the hearts of some women toward those who have worshiped them with a love befitting angels! Can not a smile of God enter the sunless hearts of those who were sent on earth to minister to man's sorrows?"

Louise raised her eyes to his at this appeal, softened and subdued. All the temper seemed to have left the wayward girl, and the eyes of the loving gazelle never looked softer than did those of Louise Morton at that moment. There is no knowing what kind answer she would have given Deville, if George May had not entered at that moment, and with his smiling face spread new cheerfulness around.

It was the first time in his life that Deville did not rejoice in the coming of his friend, and a light cloud settled on his face; but when George, after greeting Miss Morton, put his arm around Deville's neck, with "Well, old fellow, how are you?" his good humor returned, and he answered, "Why, George, you bad boy, I haven't seen you since breakfast, and I expected you at the bank."

"Why, I have been having the jolliest time in the world," answered May. "I spent all the morning after breakfast with Mrs. Eton and Miss Carrolton. I lunched there, and this afternoon rode out on the Bloomingdale Road with them, and, by Jove! if the people didn't stare at that girl I'm a sinner. I don't wonder at it, she was dressed so natty."

"I suppose you, too, are in love with her milkmaid cheeks and silly blue eyes," broke in Louise, quietly. "I am not surprised at people staring, for the girl is certainly a fright. I expect she is a milliner and makes her own dresses, for no one knows who these Carroltons are. The bonnet she wore the other day was perfectly ridiculous."

"Now, Miss Morton," said May, "how can you talk so? The young lady is as pretty as a peach, and," in an undertone, "there is only one woman whom I think beautiful, Louise, and that is yourself."

"George May, don't talk such nonsense. You are a mere boy, and ought to be ashamed of yourself. Come here and hold my yarn in your hands while I ball it off. You are not fit for anything else in the world."

As Louise said this, in her naturally coquettish way, she really

looked the most beautiful of women. She knew her power, and understood the art of pleasing when it suited her to exert herself. Like the captain of a ship-of-war, she was almost always strung up to be tyrannical, yet as even a martinet will relax when he retires to his cabin, and be hail fellow with his officers over the enlivening bottle, so Louise could occasionally relax the waywardness of her character, and make life a heaven to all around.

Deville and May were her subjects, over whom she exercised despotic sway without fear of consequences. She knew that both these men loved her, but she felt that they loved each other with an affection seldom felt by men for their own kind. May's regard for Deville was a kind of hero-worship. He would even have been willing to see him marry Louise Morton, if she would not marry him. Every time she directed cruel remarks to Deville, it cut into May's heart as if she had struck him with a knife.

"How can you," he would say to her, "treat so cruelly a man who loves you so, and would sacrifice his life for you?" To which she would reply, "Why don't you make love on your own account, George May, and not for another man? But you are only a boy, and don't know what love means." "I would sacrifice everything for Deville, he is such a noble fellow," was always May's reply.

Louise looked upon George May as a mere boy, although he was some years her senior; and, although she desired his homage, had no intention of marrying him.

A marriage of their daughter to George May, who was the only son of a rich widow, would have been very agreeable to Mr. and Mrs. Morton, but they felt that his soft, yielding nature was hardly suited to the impetuous and domineering character of Louise. They knew little of Deville, except that he was rich and handsome, with self-possession enough for any woman in the world. Louise, in her bitterest and most sarcastic moods, had never caused him to exhibit the least excitement, or to swerve from his fixed purpose to win her at all hazards; and those who knew him felt satisfied he would rule her, and yet do it affectionately.

"I am not suited to her, Deville," George May had said to him. "She would break my heart in a month. You marry her, and let me go abroad to travel. I shall recover from the shock in a year or two."

"No," Deville replied, "as long as there is any hope for you I will not bind myself to her. It would be better for us to both

agree never to marry her, for she would never make either of us happy. I'll never marry her, George, unless you fully consent."

On this evening Louise had attained one of her pleasantest moods. The clouds which marred her countenance had vanished, and in their place reigned the golden sunshine that made all hearts glad. Her laugh was like the rippling brook, and she seemed all the more attractive from the devious ways she sometimes practiced. As she parted for the night from those who loved her, she left an image on their hearts so fair that they wished it could never be obliterated. No wonder men loved her and fell under her fascination. Who does not love an April day, with its clouds and bursts of sunshine?

"Come," she said to George May, "hold up your hands and let me wind my warp. They are better fitted for the distaff than for the sword."

"And yet," said Deville, "I should be sorry to receive a sword-thrust from those small hands. You do May injustice, Miss Morton, for his muscles are like steel."

"As for you, Mr. Deville," said Louise, "your hands are too big for my skein. You would be more useful, and command my admiration more, if you were somewhat smaller."

"I wouldn't have him deprived of a particle of that magnificent muscle for all the usefulness in the world," said May. "He can handle a dozen men, and his heart is as strong and big as his body. Deville, I envy you your size and strength."

"Well you may, you dear little boy," said Louise, "and if you don't attend closer to your yarn-winding I'll send you to bed without any supper," and her merry laugh echoed through the room.

"Who can help loving her?" said May to Deville, in a whisper.

"Who, indeed?" returned the latter.

Then she would seat herself at the piano, and warble some choice piece of music like a bird, while Deville or May turned over the leaves for her. Then she would strike out in a wild improvisation of her own, and fairly startle her listeners with her wonderful talents. This was Louise in her happiest mood—would that it could always last! The sea in its rest is lovely to look upon, but it will not always continue so.

The evening ended happily for all concerned. The parents were happy to see their daughter appearing to such advantage, and so differently from what they apprehended. The two young men

were charmed as they never had been before, and left for their homes in a happy frame of mind.

"By heavens, Deville!" exclaimed May, "she is the loveliest creature on earth."

Deville walked on in silence. Whatever his thoughts were, he kept them to himself. As they neared Deville's lodgings he said, "George, I can offer you a bed to-night, but you will find me poor company, for I can't talk."

"Nor I either," replied May, "so I think I had better go home." So they bade each other good-night, and sought their respective domiciles.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MORTONS AT HAWKS' ROOST.

MERRY May had come and almost gone. Hill-sides and plains were covered with full-leaved trees, their branches tenanted by the choral songsters of the groves. The youth of both sexes were seeking the sylvan solitudes, culling wild flowers, or resting on the gray, moss-covered rocks, over which the rich-leaved trees threw a grateful shade.

What joy to leave the city's hateful noise and polluted air, and all life's annoyances, to breathe the free atmosphere of the woods, where gentle streams meander through the hollows to the sea! The sun at noonday scarcely penetrates these forest-glades; the air comes down the valleys laden with coolness from the mountain-tops, and earth offers no fairer scene.

What pleasure to watch the rising of the sun in summer, as he soars to the blue vault of heaven, brightening the woods and fields, and infusing life into flowers and leaves! Look at those clouds bathed in golden light, which a moment ago were dressed in mourning-weeds. See those valleys, lately darkened by the shades of night, now teeming with life, while busy labor goes forth to resume its daily toil. The silver river flows on, lit up by the sun's bright rays, while snow-white sails dot its smooth surface.

One day of such a life as this is worth weeks of existence in the crowded city, where the murky atmosphere scarce permits the sun to show his face for half the year, and in the summer scorches the weary denizens like the breath of the sirocco. Go, then, to the

woods and hills, ye who would enjoy the beauties that Nature exhibits to those who love her ! In the presence of Nature you can read a lesson never to be learned in the most gorgeous city.

The heat began to tell upon the inhabitants of New York, and many longed to fly to the lake, or the rock-bound coast, where lashing waves follow the freshening gale, or to shady glens and rippling streams, where the kingfisher's dip is heard in the dark pool. Some love the mountain and some the valley, but, fortunately for us, all tastes can be gratified.

At the time of which we write, Coney Island and the thousand other pleasure-resorts now frequented were undreamed of. Those who wanted to visit the sea-coast had generally to take with them the paraphernalia of a regular camp. Some found shelter in the houses of fishermen and farmers along the shore, but Cape May was about the only place between the east end of Long Island and Cape Henry that afforded accommodation for summer sojourners. There they could disport in the sea, and find ample accommodations on the beach, where two hotels with high-sounding names reared their heads.

Many of the wealthiest citizens of New York had summer retreats along the Hudson, not then, as now, polluted by the sewerage of so many towns and cities.

Mr. Morton owned a beautiful country-seat about a mile and a half north of the village of Catskill, where long ago Rip Van Winkle, on his return from his wanderings in the mountains, roamed the streets with all the village children at his heels, and where the sounds of nine-pin balls, played by old Hendrick Hudson and his ghostly followers, can still at intervals be heard reverberating through the mountains.

Mr. Job Eton had a very pretty cottage two miles above the village. It was unpretentious, because, as Mr. Eton explained, he was opposed to snobbery of every kind, and, while the house of Eton & Co. could buy out all the Mortons in New York, he would not throw away his money in an expensive barber-shop, such as Mr. Morton had erected.

There were numbers of other pretty cottages along the banks of the river, some jutting over the bold cliffs, some a few rods back, and some with pretty gardens in front and with a neat paling along the edge of the cliffs, to guard, perhaps, against the children falling from the rocks.

About half a mile from the Morton villa stood two taverns, the

"Dove" and the "Lamb," shaded by large trees, and backed by fruit- and vegetable-gardens. These inns offered comfortable accommodations to those who sought in summer the quiet of the country. In this little village, and its surroundings, were to be found all the necessary comforts for a prolonged sojourn during the heats of summer.

All the cottagers were preparing early in June to leave New York for their summer retreats. The steamer *Rip Van Winkle*, which stopped at all the landings, was daily loading up with furniture and stores for the up-river country-seats.

On the fifth of June the Mortons took possession of their country house, and they were soon followed by the Etons. Within a stone's throw of the latter Flossy and her father occupied a small cottage.

Deville and May went off into the wilderness salmon-fishing, but promised themselves the pleasure of seeing their friends, the Mortons, early in September. A party of young gentlemen well known to society promised to spend the latter part of the warm season in the vicinity of Catskill.

The villa, which Mr. Morton had built about three years before, was a very pretty mansion, somewhat in the French style. A wide hall ran through the house, with two parlors and a library on one side, a ball-room on the other, and a dining- and billiard-room in the rear. Great taste had been displayed in the furniture and fittings, which were light and graceful, as befitting a summer residence.

The mansion was surrounded by a wide veranda, fitted with striped Chinese curtains to keep off the sun's rays. There were fifteen sleeping-rooms for the family and guests, containing every appliance for comfort and luxury. The kitchen and servants' quarters were in the basement. At the northwest corner of the house stood a square tower, with a bell to call the loitering family or their visitors to meals. There were ample stalls for twelve horses, five carriages of different kinds, and a large corps of servants.

In front of the house was a well-kept lawn with parterres of flowers, and adjoining it stood a beautiful grove of giant forest-trees. In front of the house there were two magnificent elms, which shaded the mansion from the evening sun. South of the house was a fine fruit- and vegetable-garden, with a hot-house filled with rare plants, under the care of an experienced gardener.

Mr. Morton had expended seventy thousand dollars on his country-seat, which Mr. Eton stigmatized as a barber-shop. Fortu-

nately, Mr. Eton stood alone in his opinion, for the world pronounced the establishment perfect.

At the foot of the cliffs, at the river's edge, reached by a winding path, was a substantial dock, to which were moored three beautiful boats in which the family and guests could take exercise on the river. These boats were under the charge of an experienced waterman, who dwelt in a little cottage near the dock.

One might search the world over to find a more charming situation than "Hawks' Roost," for such was the name of the cliff where the Morton villa overlooked the Hudson. What could there be more delightful than to spend the heated months in such a place, where it was never oppressively hot in the day-time, and always cool at night? How much better such an existence than to be packed away in some great hotel, where there is little comfort and no quiet! How much more desirable the humblest cottage that one can call his own, than the most gorgeous hotel that ever reared its pretentious head!

The sea-side, as it is now enjoyed at Newport, Long Branch, and other places where the rich can have their own homes, is a life not to be despised; but how much more desirable is a roomy home in the highlands, away from the crowds that infest the sea-shore, with country air, country sports, and a comely set of young people, whose laugh echoes through the summer woods, and whose hearts, unknown to themselves, are filled with the spirit of poetry!

It is only in the highlands that the heart of youth opens itself to youth and drinks in the poetry of life—for there is poetry in every step one takes. The mountain-air kisses the tender cheek, giving a bloom and freshness known only in the mountains—so different from the rude embrace of old ocean, as he clasps you in his arms after the storms have swept over him!

There is no sentiment or poetry in the surroundings of a seaside caravansary unless, perchance, in some favored spot where sylvan woods hold companionship with the shore, and silver streams mingle their melodies with the roar of the breakers.

The old-fashioned days—when summer homes were filled with welcome guests, where around the festive board were gathered choice spirits that made the welkin ring with laughter—are poorly represented by the sea-side gatherings of later days.

There were several features which added to the beauty of the grounds at Hawks' Roost. In the southern garden were a number of grottoes formed in the rocks, with luxuriant mosses, and springs

of pure water bubbling up from the stony floor. At night these were lighted up with colored lamps, and formed a retreat where lovers might wander, or one more prosaic might smoke his cigar, and listen to the whip-poor-will's melancholy song.

Everything at Hawks' Roost spoke of happiness; if there was an elysium on earth, this seemed to be the place to find it.

But was happiness indeed to be found in this lovely place, amid these venerable trees and smooth-mown lawns, or did the sweet music of the birds in sylvan bowers swell upon the air a mere mockery of joy? Was there a skeleton buried beneath the velvet sod, that might rise at any moment and harass the hearts of those who dwelt here? We will wait and see.

Mr. and Mrs. Morton's family consisted of themselves and two daughters—Louise, already introduced to the reader, and Angeline, a girl of fourteen, generally known by the sobriquet of "Patch."

The latter was a perfect hoiden. Her clothes were half the time in strips from climbing trees and fences. Her mother had found it so difficult to restrain her spirits and keep her in clothes, that her dresses bore the marks of many patches.

Angeline was a beautiful child of her age, though awkward and unformed, but many thought that when she arrived at her sister's age she would equal her in form and feature, and far surpass her in loveliness of character—for Angeline was full of generous impulses, and all her impulses showed a nobility of character not often found in one so young.

Mr. and Mrs. Morton had a son, a lieutenant in the navy, attached to the brig Curlew, of twelve guns, and at this time away from home.

Harry Morton was the idol of his mother and the pride of his father. He was now twenty-seven years of age, and was making a cruise in the West Indies in pursuit of the pirates, which were then preying on our commerce. He was expected home in September, when, as he informed his father by letter, the captain and several officers of the Curlew had promised to spend a month with him at Hawks' Roost.

Hawks' Roost was all alive with joy at this news, for Harry Morton was a universal favorite. As to Patch, there was no end to her rejoicings. She climbed a dozen extra trees on that day by way of giving vent to her feelings.

But when Mr. Morton informed Louise that Harry would be home in September, she merely said, "Yes, papa." And when her

father said, "Is that all you have to say on an occasion that will give me so much pleasure?" she answered, "Yes, papa, all!" Louise was in one of her moods, and her father, knowing how useless it would be to reproach her for her want of affection, strode off to his library to indulge in gloomy reverie.

There were two other members of the family proper—Miss Bane, the housekeeper, and Miss Schwartz, a teacher of music and the German language.

There was also Mr. Morton's private secretary, Edgar Lane, who spent a great deal of his time at Hawks' Roost. This young man would come up from the city on Monday morning and sometimes stay three or four days, employed in writing, and then return to the city, with such instructions as his employer had to give him. As he enjoyed Mr. Morton's entire confidence, he was intrusted with many matters that he would not have confided to any one else.

Edgar Lane was a good-looking young man, with delicate features and a pale complexion, and with large black eyes that seemed to illuminate his whole face. There was a slight hectic tinge in his cheek that might be the seeds of disease, but he was never ill, and could perform almost any amount of work required of him.

Edgar was a general favorite in the Morton family, and even Miss Morton deigned to treat him with consideration. He was so obliging and so competent that he could attend to any number of feminine commissions, from a box of hair-pins to the most expensive laces, and had even selected fall-bonnets to be sent up by the milliner. He had become a necessity to all the family. Even Miss Bane, the housekeeper, seemed to consider she had a claim on him, and called him "the dearest fellow in the world."

He was devoted to Patch, to whom he was always bringing some little memento from the city, while he looked up to Louise as to some divinity superior and apart from ordinary womankind; and, for a wonder, he was the only one upon whom, when out of sorts, she did not expend her spleen.

As to Patch, she treated Edgar always as an elder brother. She would go with him to the steamboat when he went to the city, swinging on his arm or walking by his side, telling him of the numberless things he was to do for her, while Louise would often accompany them, walking quietly by Edgar's side, and wave her handkerchief as the boat swung off into the stream.

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She looked at him with eyes of steel. "You ask me if any one stands in *your* way. I tell you, yes, there is; and in my way too!" Page 351.

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CHAPTER XXV.

EDGAR LANE AND THE MORTONS.

EDGAR LANE had been in Mr. Morton's service since he was eighteen years old, and the family had thus learned to treat him as a near relative.

When Edgar was eighteen Louise was a beautiful child of thirteen, and he distinguished her by his notice as much as he did Patch at the present time ; but there was now a more respectful air manifested toward Louise, while she no longer in company treated him with the familiarity that she did when a child.

It was evident enough, when Edgar's dark eyes rested on Louise Morton's face and form, that it was with a feeling warmer than mere friendship ; and often, in the presence of others, she would gaze into his eyes with that loving expression she could assume at will, and which filled him with inexpressible happiness. Did they love each other ? Who can say ? Or was this intercourse the result of childhood's early friendship, which often lasts through years without ripening into love ?

With all of Mr. Morton's fondness for his secretary, Edgar Lane knew that any attachment he might have for Louise would never meet with his employer's sanction. Mr. Morton was what might be called a stern man, especially in matters of the heart where the standing of the parties was different in point of wealth and social position. Edgar had full knowledge of his employer's sentiments on this subject, and, although Mr. Morton could not conveniently do without his secretary, or prevent his intimacy with his daughters, yet he had given the young man fair warning, couched in general terms, from which Edgar knew there could be no appeal. Mr. Morton expected for his daughters the best alliances in the land as regarded family and wealth, and Edgar could bring neither of these to aid his cause, if he had dared to raise his eyes to the peerless Louise. His mother was a widow, whom Mr. Morton had rescued from extreme poverty twelve years before. He had taken a fancy to her handsome boy, had placed him at school for some years, and then taken him into his banking-house.

Mr. Morton had given Edgar to understand what the consequences would be to his daughter if she should make a misalli-

ance, and, having duly ventilated his sentiments on this subject in his own family, gave himself no further trouble about the matter. He had no great fear that Louise would wish to marry any man beneath her in social position ; he thought there was little danger of her heart breaking, and often wished she had more softness and affection.

Mr. Morton placed entire confidence in his secretary, and so far had no reason to regret his trust.

As for Mrs. Morton, she had never given herself the slightest concern about the matter. She saw in Edgar only a good friend, who would act the part of a brother toward her daughters, and would never forget the obligations he was under to Mr. Morton, or the consequences he would incur if he should ever dare to raise his eyes to either of her daughters, except in the way of friendship.

Edgar could see in such a course only a complete sacrifice of all his hopes of preferment, an end to his relations with the Mortons, disgrace to himself, and privation to his mother, who would feel more keenly than any one else his ingratitude to his employer.

Mr. Morton had rather lost faith in Louise since his interview with Mme. Boulanger, the head of the "finishing school," where pupils were taught how to enter a ball-room, and to deceive their parents. Although he had not pursued the matter, he determined to keep his eye on Louise, and see if she had any foolish love affairs on hand ; but, seeing no further grounds for suspicion, he began to think that perhaps his daughter had told the truth in saying that she was merely acting as a go-between with Miss Spanker and her lover. That was bad enough in all conscience, not that Mr. Morton cared at all for Miss Spanker, or the whole Spanker family. He was simply ashamed that his daughter should be mixed up with such vulgar people, and he ordered Louise never to recognize that young woman, no matter where she might meet her.

As for love, Mr. Morton gave his family to understand that he did not propose to tolerate the sentiment, except on such terms as he should dictate. "Let us have common sense in all things," said he. "No misalliance was ever a success. A man that owes his position to a woman always feels humiliated, and the world puts her before him. No matter how such a woman may love a man inferior to her in social position, she despises his relatives."

Having thus expounded the Morton law, this "purse-proud aristocrat" would settle down to read his paper, and reckon up his profits on the last quarter's operations.

The reader may naturally inquire, "Who was Mr. Morton that he should assume so much?" And he may remember that once, when that gentleman was impressing upon his daughter the importance of connecting herself with the best families, Louise asked him, in her most aggravating way, "Are *we* descended from an old family?" As it was rather a difficult question to answer, Mr. Morton evaded it, a circumstance that was not lost on his daughter, who had treasured it up in case of contingencies.

The first that was known of Mr. Morton, he appeared in Albany some twenty-five years before the date of our story, and established himself as a broker in real estate, soon extending his operations as far as the city of New York. A shrewd man of business, correct in all his dealings, he secured the confidence of all who knew him, and his business consequently extended so rapidly that in a few years he removed to New York. When he left Albany he was reckoned to be worth a hundred thousand dollars, a large fortune for those days.

On his arrival in New York, Mr. Morton took a good house in Bowling Green, and advertised himself as a banker and real-estate broker. He soon had a large number of depositors and clients. He bought largely on his own account, and soon owned some of the best lots in the city, several large stores on Broadway, and others in various parts of the city. He also speculated in cotton, adding largely to his wealth in this way.

In a few years he gave up the agency for real estate, and purchased altogether on his own account. He set up a handsome carriage, and purchased the elegant mansion in which he was now living. Then cards flowed in upon him, and an elegant party given to his callers exhibited his wealth. Every one felt sorry they had not known the Mortons sooner.

Mr. Morton was soon at the top of the ladder. His handsome wife won all hearts by her engaging manners, and her beautiful children were the admiration of everybody who saw them. What more could a man desire?

But yet Mr. Morton was not happy. He was reserved to all acquaintances, and had not a single intimate friend. He did all he could to bring the best society to his house, but he offered no attraction in himself. He was a fine-looking, gentlemanly man, but the guests that dined with him never stayed late; they seemed to feel that he would rather be alone. Mr. Morton and his wife did not commune much together when alone, although he

loved her as much as it was in his nature to love any one, and gratified all her wishes. She felt that within the last few years he had withdrawn himself a good deal from her in his confidences, but, as he gave her every proof of affection, she attributed it to advancing years and the engrossing cares of his business.

No one ever asked who Mr. Morton was, or where he came from. It was enough to know that he was a gentleman, a man of honor, and the leading banker. The public were astonished at the manner in which he had stood the run on his bank after the robbery, not suspecting that but for the timely aid of Deville he would have been seriously embarrassed. The secret was known only to Deville and Mr. Morton.

Autumn has come and the glory of the year is about to pass away. Nature has clothed herself, as it were, in half-mourning for the golden days of spring and summer that have vanished like fleeting dreams.

It is sad to see the spring and summer pass away. It is like a man giving up his youth ; and, as winter comes on apace, it is like the advance of old age creeping in to terminate our short span of existence. But autumn, with its mellow light, comes in between to take away the shock we all would feel if winter should spring direct from the arms of summer. Nature has so tempered the seasons that we can derive happiness from all the changes that occur, and when summer passes away, with her gorgeous plenitude of leaves and flowers, she leaves a pleasing soberness in the tints of autumn that amply repays us for the loss of buds and flowers.

What a glory there is in the autumn woods, and how lovely is the stream with their rich hues reflected in its waters ! How pleasant is the sound of crackling leaves as we tread them under foot in our woodland rambles ! And pleasant also are the gambols of the squirrel as he gathers his winter stores from the trees, and the tapping of the woodpecker as he bores his way through the bark, in search of morsels to suit his fastidious taste.

In summer we love to roam the woods with a pleasant companion, when the forest-glades are teeming with life, when mossy seats of deepest green tempt one to rest and watch the sun's rays peeping through the leaves, lighting up the recesses of the shady retreats. In autumn we love to roam the forest alone, our thoughts as somber as the surrounding gloom. We admire the stalwart oak with gnarled trunk and widespread limbs, and think how many

winters have howled around its head. The tender vine now clings to its noble trunk and finds a safe asylum, till winter comes with frosty breath and fills his branches with dangling icicles. 'Tis sad to see the approach of winter, to know that we are leaving rich autumn behind, with its bracing air that stirs the life-blood in man and nature.

At Hawks' Roost the summer had passed pleasantly but quietly, and the autumn shone with unusual splendor. The Etons and the Carroltons have been the only constant visitors to the Morton mansion. Mrs. Eton had asked Mrs. Morton's permission to bring Flossy to see her, and that lady had complied with the request, although Louise declared to her mother she should never be able to treat "that Carrolton girl" with civility, she had such a common look. She was sure that her papa wouldn't like people whom no one knew anything about. Louise was not aware that Mr. Carrolton had already found his way to her father's heart by depositing in his own name twenty thousand dollars in the bank of Morton & Co., which money Mr. Robert had furnished for a purpose.

As Carrolton frequently consulted the banker on business matters and took his advice, Mr. Morton treated him with consideration, although it was not until after he went to the country that Mr. Morton deigned to invite him to his house. One day, when riding out, Mr. Morton called and left his card on Carrolton, in the latter's absence.

"What a snob!" exclaimed Mr. Job Eton. "As if Carrolton wasn't worth ten of old Morton! Why, Carrolton's family came over with William the thingumbob, and nobody knows whether Morton had a grandfather or not. He puts on more airs, if possible, out here in the country than he does in town. I suppose he thinks he is the only man that could build a shingle palace. Why, Eton & Co. could build a better villa than his twice over, and never feel it—couldn't they, Fanny?" addressing his wife.

"Of course they could, darling," replied his wife. "Eton & Co. could do anything. But we mustn't quarrel with the Mortons; our pleasure here depends on them. I am going to take Flossy over and introduce her, and, when they know her, all the Mortons will fall in love with her, as everybody else has done."

So one morning Mrs. Eton took Flossy to Hawks' Roost. The young girl stared at the splendid rooms, the gorgeous furniture, and the thousand and one things that wealthy people love to surround themselves with.

"Oh, my!" said she, "I'm frightened to death. I am afraid to meet face to face that girl with the dreadful eyes. I'm sure she will fly at me and eat me up!"

"You foolish thing!" laughed Mrs. Eton; "as if any one would fly at *you*! I shouldn't wonder, though, at her wanting to eat you up, for you look so lovely in that dress of yours! You must do your prettiest this morning. I want you to win Mrs. Morton's good opinion. I don't mind Louise, she is so variable. One does not know where to find her, but, for all we know, she may prove to be very pleasant if not variable."

"I shan't go down to that odious Mrs. Eton and that girl she has adopted," exclaimed Louise when the cards were sent up. "I hate the sight of them."

"Why, darling," said her mother, "you never saw Miss Carrolton except at a distance, and you know nothing about her. Now do be agreeable to these people for my sake, and you shall have a water-party on the river."

"I'll try," said Louise. She knew that a water-party meant with Edgar Lane in charge, for he was an expert boatman, and Mrs. Morton never trusted her daughters on the river without him.

When they came down to the parlor Mrs. Eton was all smiles, and Flossy quite flustered in fear of the girl with the dreadful eyes. Mrs. Morton advanced with quiet dignity to receive her visitors, somewhat troubled in mind as to how Louise would behave. But Mrs. Eton rushed forward and seized her outstretched hand. "Oh, this is so lovely of you, you dear, sweet Mrs. Morton!" she exclaimed, "to take the trouble to come down to us this warm morning; but this sweet child was so anxious to know you, I could not refrain from calling."

"It is not at all warm," replied Mrs. Morton, in her practical way. "I am delighted to see you, and to make the acquaintance of this young lady, of whom I have heard so much." With this she kissed Flossy affectionately. Louise courtesied to Miss Flossy in Madame Faucet's most approved style, and held out her hand, which Flossy seized with avidity, though she was trembling all over. But where were the dreadful eyes that Flossy had seen in the carriage? They were replaced by two gazelle-like orbs that beamed kindly upon her.

"Come to the light," said Louise, "and let me look at you. You look enough like George May to be his sister, only you are handsomer as a woman than he is as a man. I know I shall love

you as much as I can any one, and if George will only fall in love with you I shall be perfectly happy. You would make such a match! I am an odd creature, Miss Carrolton, and have awful likes and dislikes. I was very near disliking you. I had heard so much of you and your pretty costumes that I determined not to like you, yet here I find myself falling in love with you at once."

"Oh, I am so happy!" exclaimed Flossy. "You are so beautiful that every one must love you."

"You think so," said Louise; "but I am a little devil at times, and very capricious with those I don't love. But we shall have delightful times during the rest of the season, for we don't return to the city until the seventh of November. I must try and like Mrs. Eton for your sake; but she puts on such airs, and cuts up so with James Deville, and old Eton is such a fool, and altogether—you understand how it is."

"Yes," said Flossy; "but Mrs. Eton is very good to me, and I'm sure you'll like her when you know her better."

"Perhaps so," said Louise. "But let me show you the garden."

The morning passed very pleasantly, and, when the visitors went away, Louise promised to return the call at once.

The visiting went on all summer, and time passed so rapidly they did not know where it had gone to. They had picnics and water-parties on the Hudson, which Edgar Lane took charge of, and who was always at Louise's side, never troubling himself about Flossy any more than he could help, although that young lady declared he was ever so nice.

Flossy remarked to Mrs. Eton one evening on their way home from one of these excursions, "Edgar Lane is handsome, but don't you think him a little obtuse? He takes no notice whatever of my blandishments."

"Ah, you innocent darling!" said her friend, "he's not as stupid as you think. Edgar wouldn't dare look at you, or any other girl, when Louise was by. He has been in love with her ever since she was thirteen years old, and they say she is as much in love with him as her aristocratic notions will permit her to be. But Edgar had better never let old Morton suspect him, for he would trample him under foot as if he were a worm. Morton is a hard, stern man, and will have his own way; so will his daughter, and, if she makes up her mind, she will marry Edgar despite every obstacle. Now, Flossy, you must soar higher than that; catch George May, or Beaufort Semmes, or Ray Henry, who will all be up here in an-

other week. Don't fly with a crow when you can soar with an eagle."

In this way Flossy's eyes began gradually to be opened.

CHAPTER XXVI.

NEW DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THE day following the conversation reported in the last chapter, while Mrs. Eton and her *protégés* were riding out, they passed a handsome, well-dressed gentleman taking his afternoon walk. He turned as the carriage passed and raised his hat. "My, what a handsome man!" exclaimed Flossy; "what a complexion and what a pair of eyes!"

"Do you know," said Mrs. Eton, "that when I first caught sight of him I was sure he was James Deville? He is of the same height, and has the same broad shoulders, but then Deville has not such a long, swinging walk as this gentleman. Who can he be?"

"I don't know," said Flossy, "but he's splendid. My heart has palpitated ever since I saw him. He looks like one of the English nobility."

"Pshaw! Flossy, you are always talking of your English nobility. We've had several of them here, and, generally speaking, they are sorry-looking fellows. But we must find out who this person is, and if he is staying in the neighborhood, in which case Mr. Eton shall call on him."

During the rest of the ride they could talk of nothing but the handsome stranger. When they reached home, what was their surprise to see him sitting on the porch chatting with Mr. Eton, who whispered to his wife as he handed her out of the carriage, "Mr. Vere Saye, my darling; brought letters of introduction to me only; didn't call on Morton. A great swell—nephew of the Bishop of Hertford—graduate of Oxford—has a living waiting for him when he returns to England—and all that."

The distinguished stranger stood with hat in hand waiting to be introduced to the ladies, after which he apologized for the very great liberty he had taken in raising his hat to them. "But," said he, "you know it's an English custom, and it's hard to lay aside one's habits. If the ladies will permit me to say so, the defer-

ence I paid them was involuntary, for one doesn't meet such attractions every day on a country road."

The accent of Mr. Vere Saye was altogether English; no one could mistake him for anything else.

The ladies thought his remarks charming, especially his allusion to their attractions. The stranger stayed to tea, and, in fact, until quite late in the evening, though propriety suggested to him that he should leave shortly after; but Flossy's company proved an irresistible attraction. He kept up an animated conversation with that young lady, quoted Byron, Moore, and other poets, till Flossy quite lost her heart.

"I declare," she said to Mrs. Eton after Mr. Vere Saye had taken his departure, "he is as handsome as Mr. Deville, if not more so, and he certainly has the advantage of him in complexion. I shall not be able to sleep to-night for thinking of all the beautiful poetry he quoted."

"Yes, you will sleep," said Mrs. Eton, "and dream of Mr. Vere Saye too, I expect, you foolish little girl! That heart of yours is ready to run away with every handsome man that comes along. Not long ago you were undecided whether you were in love with May or Deville, and I do believe, if you hadn't supposed both of them to be in love with some one else, you would have proposed to them."

"Now, Mrs. Eton," said Flossy, "you know as well as I do that, after being surfeited with roses, a bunch of water-lilies is delightful. Almost any change is pleasant, and such a handsome man as Mr. Vere Saye is a great change; besides, George May calls me his little sister, and we are too much alike to fall in love with each other; and then he's dead in love with Miss Morton—so that kind of talk is all nonsense. Mr. Deville is either in love with some one in Europe, or so much enamored with himself, that he can't think of any one else—perhaps, though, it's you he is in love with, you sly little woman!"

"*Perhaps*," replied Mrs. Eton, significantly. "He wouldn't be the first man, Flossy. But only to think of his putting up at the 'Dove' tavern! It's a sweet little place, and Mrs. Briggs, the landlady, is a famous cook. I wonder if Mr. Saye is going to remain here long?"

"I wonder if he is engaged?" said Flossy.

And so the evening passed in conjectures about Mr. Vere Saye.

"I shall introduce him to Morton to-morrow," said Mr. Eton.

"I wonder if Morton will see that the man is an aristocrat, and that his ancestors came over with old Billy the what-you-call-him."

The next day the dwellers at Hawks' Roost were delighted by the receipt of a letter from Harry Morton, who informed his parents that he had reached Norfolk and would sail in a few days for New York, where he would lose no time in visiting home. He wrote that his brother officers of the Curlew, who had promised to visit Hawks' Roost, would probably come up a day or two after he did.

This threw the Morton family into a great state of excitement, in which Mrs. Eton and Flossy joined. There were Mr. Vere Saye, Mr. Deville, Mr. May, the officers of the Curlew, and several young gentlemen from New York, all to be on hand at once.

"It will remind Mr. Saye," said Flossy, "of visits to English estates in the autumn, when the young gentlemen assemble to flirt and shoot pheasants. We shall have everything here but the pheasants."

"Why," said Mr. Eton, "the woods about here are full of 'em—none of your barn-door pheasants that a man could shoot with a pocket-pistol, but great big birds that whiz through the air like a cannon-ball, and it takes a sportsman to bring them down."

"In that case," said Flossy, "it will be English all over, and there will be a chance of getting rid of the men now and then, so that we shan't tire of them."

Next day Mr. Eton called in his carriage at the "Dove" and took Mr. Vere Saye to call upon Mr. Morton, who, much to his surprise, was very affable to the stranger. The banker had already received letters from Mr. Vandeußen informing him of Mr. Vere Saye's intended visit to the Catskill Mountains, where he wished to visit the scene of Rip Van Winkle's adventures as told by Washington Irving, and see something of American life. As Mr. Vandeußen was great authority with Mr. Morton, Mr. Vere Saye found that he had fallen into pleasant places, with a prospect of seeing the best side of American society.

On a bright morning, five days after the Curlew had dropped anchor in New York, a boat from the brig might have been seen pulling up to the wharf on the North River, where the steamer Rip Van Winkle lay ready for her departure on her up-river trip. The man-of-war's boat hauled up to the gangway, and a young officer jumped on board the steamer, followed by two splendid-looking St.

Bernard dogs, which attracted the admiration of all the passengers. The dogs wandered about the boat, making acquaintances with everybody, and finally lay down at the feet of a young lady who was apparently traveling alone.

The last bell rang, the passengers were all on board, the gang-plank was hauled in, the lines cast off, the big wheels began to turn, and the Rip Van Winkle was soon speeding rapidly up the river.

The young officer from the Curlew was Harry Morton, now about to visit his parents, whom he had not seen for nearly three years. Although the Rip Van Winkle was considered the fastest steamer on the Hudson, she seemed to Lieutenant Morton exceedingly slow, so anxious was he to see his parents. Hawks' Roost had been purchased before he left home, but Harry had never seen it, nor was he familiar with the picturesque scenery of the Hudson. How beautiful everything looked to him! The trees, touched with the hues of autumn, as if heaven had rained on them a shower of the richest dyes, added fresh charms to the lovely scene.

How beautiful, he thought, must be his own home, nestling among rocky crags and giant trees, as he had often pictured it in his mind!

Lieutenant Morton was much struck with the appearance of the lonely young lady passenger to whom we have referred, and to whom his attention was drawn by the watchful care that his two dogs seemed to exercise over her. She was a beautiful girl of some twenty years of age, neatly dressed in a dark traveling suit.

The steamer had stopped at several points along the river to land passengers, and at length reaching Saugerties, the young lady arose, and, taking her light hand-valise, proceeded toward the gangway to go on shore. The two dogs rose and followed her to the gangway, as if she had been under their charge and it was their duty to see her safe over. She was half-way across the narrow plank when suddenly it tipped, and she fell into the river.

Scarcely had she touched the water when the two dogs were at her side, and, catching hold of her large sleeves, swam with her to the shore, some two hundred feet from the end of the wharf.

The young lady, though prostrated by the sudden shock, was not in the least hurt. Her chief danger was from the people that crowded to the shore as the dogs landed, but an athletic young officer pushed through the throng, picked up the prostrate form of the lovely girl, and bore her in his arms to the boat. He then called for a doctor. There is no assembly in which you can not

find a fool, a bully, a pickpocket, and a doctor. On this occasion the doctor proved to be a good one, who knew what to do. Meanwhile the steamboat continued on its course up the river, heedless of the fact that it was carrying a young lady to quite a different point than the one she started for.

"Doctor," said Harry Morton, as he laid his burden on a cot, "as this is my flotsam and jetsam, recovered by my noble dogs, I take a deep interest in the case. My dogs shall wear gold medals the rest of their lives for saving the life of this lovely creature. Did you ever see anything so beautiful as she looks in this semi-unconscious state?"

"No," said the doctor, "I can't say that I ever did; but you can imagine how much more beautiful she will look when the blood begins to course through the veins and the roses come back to her cheeks. And then, when she opens her eyes, I imagine we are going to be repaid for our trouble. Such features can only be accompanied by the most beautiful eyes. I have noticed in my practice that the most homely countenance is often redeemed from absolute ugliness by being lighted up with a pair of fine eyes, but I do not recall an instance of a woman having beautiful features that her eyes were not correspondingly beautiful."

At this moment the young lady sighed and uttered the word "Mother!" at the same moment opening her eyes and looking around with astonishment at finding herself surrounded by strangers.

"She'll be all right in half an hour," said the doctor, "and in two hours will be as well as if she hadn't fallen overboard. Here's her valise with the name, 'Mary Gale, New York.' Now," said the doctor, "we will leave her in care of the ladies, who will change her clothes and make her comfortable. Come, lieutenant, you are not wanted here any longer. You may be a good hand at putting a ship in stays, but when it comes to doing that service for a lady I fear you would be rather awkward." The doctor laughed heartily at the excellence of his own humor, but Harry, who was in no mood for laughing, failed to appreciate the joke.

Two hours later the young lady was sitting up quite recovered, though still pale and languid. She sent for the doctor—whose name was Preston—and the owner of the two noble dogs, that she might thank them. The doctor would not admit that he had done anything worthy of thanks; "and as for this young officer," said he, turning to Harry, "why, he has been made happy enough in

carrying you up from the beach to the steamboat to last him a long time. I have no doubt he would have been in the water after you had not his dogs been too quick for him. These navy fellows are gallant dogs, and navy dogs are gallant fellows, as you have seen to-day"; and the facetious doctor laughed again. "By the by, sir," said Dr. Preston, "some friends of mine in Catskill are expecting their son, Lieutenant Harry Morton, of the navy, to pay them a visit. Do you happen to know him?"

"Yes," said Harry; "no one knows him better than I do."

"Indeed!" said the doctor; "and how soon may his parents expect him?"

"He is on board the Rip Van Winkle at this moment, on his way to Hawks' Roost," replied Harry.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the doctor, suddenly taking in the situation, "here I have been in company with the son of my good friends the Mortons, and didn't know it. I shan't get over it soon. Only to think, young lady, I'm quite in love with this young gentleman's sister, the most lovely creature in the world, and enough like you to be your twin sister. Don't you notice the likeness, Mr. Morton?"

"I have been away three years at sea," said Harry, "and it has been four years since I saw Louise; but I should be very happy to think that she resembled this young lady." Miss Gale blushed and changed the conversation.

It seems the young lady had an engagement at Saugerties, which now being unable to fulfill, she determined to return to the city by the down boat. The doctor cautioned her to be careful how she walked the plank next time, as there might not be any navy dogs on hand to rescue her.

So at the next landing the doctor and Harry helped her on shore, and, as the latter pressed her hand, he said, "I hope to have the pleasure of meeting you again, and trust you will permit me to call and see you in New York."

"I shall always feel indebted to you," she replied, "for your kindness, gentlemen, and shall ever remember it"—and the fitting blushes came and went as she spoke—"but it is not likely we shall meet again. Our ways of life, from what I can learn, lie wide apart. I am poor, and have an aged mother to support. I shall ever pray for you for your kindness to a friendless girl."

At that moment the steam-whistle shrieked, and Harry jumped on board the steamer to save his passage.

As the steamboat disappeared up the river, Mary Gale gazed after it with sorrowful looks, and then took her seat under a tree near the landing to await the down boat.

Harry kept his eyes fixed on the lovely stranger until the landing was no longer in sight. "By heavens!" said he, turning sorrowfully away, "that is the loveliest being I ever beheld. I'll find her again if she lives in a garret. If Louise is as lovely as she, she must indeed be a paragon."

Harry and Dr. Preston talked for an hour about the young lady, and it was not until Catskill was reached that they let the subject drop.

Catskill Landing was reached at half past five; and Harry started, valise in hand, to walk to Hawks' Roost, followed by his dogs, running and leaping like young puppies instead of the two sober-minded animals they lately appeared on board the steamboat.

The evening was cool and Harry fresh, so that he walked briskly along until, arriving at a turn in the road, a rabbit crossed his path, when the dogs immediately started after it with clumsy leaps, probably to the amusement of the rabbit, which slipped into the bushes and easily eluded its pursuers.

Harry walked on, thinking of home and his expected meeting with his family. He wondered if he would find them changed—if hard work and three additional years had bowed his father's form, or if his mother's hair would be streaked with silver. He wondered what his pet sister Patch had grown to look like; he wanted to see Louise, and judge for himself whether she was as beautiful as the young lady whom he had met on board the Rip Van Winkle. He was thinking of all these things while the dogs were in pursuit of their frolicsome rabbit, when suddenly he found himself face to face with four vicious-looking men. One of them carried a small boy on his shoulder, and the others shabby-looking bundles in their hands.

"I say, mister," said the foremost ruffian, "have you a ticker, and will you tell us the time o' day?"

"I can tell you the time of day fast enough without a ticker," said Harry; "it wants but a few minutes of six o'clock."

"But," said the fellow as the four ruffians closed around him, "you must have looked at your ticker to know the time, and I'd like to see what kind of a warming-pan such a flash-looking covey as you carries about him."

"Grab him, Bill," said one of the ruffians, "and see what his

ditty-bag holds"; and the fellow made a dive for the valise. But Harry, who had his right hand in his pocket, suddenly brought forth a short *lignum-vitæ* club, and brought it down so forcibly on the rascal's head that he laid him quivering on the ground; and at the same instant he blew his whistle, which echoed through the woods.

The first ruffian drew a long knife and rushed at Harry with an oath, but Harry, quick as lightning, struck him a blow on the wrist that made him drop his weapon. But he seized Harry by the throat with his left hand before he could repeat the blow, and the other two rascals were about to rush in and secure their prey, singing out, "Over the cliff with him when we've got the dunnage!"

Just at this critical moment the two dogs, who had heard their master's whistle, arrived on the scene and attacked the villains in the rear, who, before they could realize what was the matter, were upon the ground, with the fangs of the dogs in their flesh.

Harry was master of the field, and magnanimously called off his dogs, an order they reluctantly obeyed. The three robbers made good use of their time and were soon out of sight, leaving the little boy and their bundles behind.

The man who had been knocked down by Harry now began to revive, and, raising himself on his elbow, muttered, "I say, Bill Slicer, the cap'n 'll give you hell; you know its agin orders; three months in the sweat-box aboard the schooner, if you don't have to walk the plank." Then he fell back on the grass. Pretty soon he raised himself again and said, incoherently, "Bill, if anything happens to that boy you'll get ten dozen with the cats; the schooner's only four miles off, you know. Take that off my head; you're crushing me."

Harry Morton did not know what to do. He had won a victory under remarkable circumstances. The men were evidently sailors belonging to some vessel on the river, and, after all, might have only intended to frighten him. Doubtless they had deserved punishment for their insolence. The man on the ground had fallen into a lethargy, and, as night was coming on, Harry determined to push forward and send back assistance to his prostrate foe. He tied the small but heavy bundles together and slung them across the back of one of the dogs, and, putting the little boy on the other, resumed his march toward Hawks' Roost.

The boy had exhibited no fear or excitement; on the contrary,

he seemed to be highly amused with all that had occurred ; and his ride on the dog's back seemed especially to please him. He was a handsome boy, with beautiful black eyes and chestnut curls. His age could not have been more than seven years. Harry asked the boy several questions, but he apparently did not understand them, for he merely shook his head and laughed.

It was now nearly sunset when Harry came in sight of a pretty cottage embowered in a wealth of vines and shrubbery. This was Mrs. Eton's eyrie, which she called the "Dove-cote." Mrs. Eton, Flossy, and the accomplished Mr. Vere Saye were sitting together on the veranda as Harry and his caravan came along the road.

Mrs. Eton clapped her hands and exclaimed, "Why, that must be Harry Morton and his two dogs, Jupiter and Ammon, that he has been writing about. But what boy is that, I wonder ? and what a funny little monkey he is !"

"Unless I am mistaken," said Mr. Vere Saye, "that young officer has gained a battle and is taking his prize into port. Both those dogs are spotted with blood, and the boy is the very same one that was carried on the shoulders of the ill-looking straggler that passed here an hour ago. It would be a jolly joke if the youngster had defeated the whole party, you know."

"Oh, the dear, sweet fellow ! How manly and handsome he looks, to be sure !" said Flossy. "I wonder if he is engaged."

"There you go, you silly little thing !" said Mrs. Eton, "losing your heart before you know anything about the youth—but he'll be a great catch, Flossy, so get him if you can."

"Pshaw !" said Flossy, "can't I sympathize with the young man after he has gone through such a terrible struggle ?"

Meanwhile Harry was in sight of his father's house, which he knew from description. Entering the house, he took his way to the library, where he suspected his father would be found. Sure enough, there sat Mr. Morton reading by the window, and when he saw Harry he jumped up with the first smile on his face that had appeared there for many a day. "My dear boy," he exclaimed, "I am so glad to see you !" and he warmly embraced his son.

The boy and the dogs lay down on the rug, quite unnoticed by Mr. Morton, who rang the bell and told the servant he would like to see Mrs. Morton in the library.

"We'll give her a surprise, Harry," said he. Harry soon had his mother in his arms, and, giving her a good hug, covered her face with kisses.

"My dear boy," she said, "what a splendid man you have grown to be! But what is all this menagerie you have brought with you, and whose child is this?"

"That," said Harry, "is my prize of war, captured after a bloody battle. Sit down and I'll tell you all about it."

At this moment Patch ran in, quite out of breath. She was up an apple-tree when informed by the gardener that her brother had arrived, and in her haste to get down had torn her dress down the back. She left her hat up the tree, and lost a shoe on her race to the house; but, never minding these trifles, she burst into the library, overturned a chair, and, giving a spring of about ten feet toward her brother, landed with both arms around his neck.

When Harry at last managed to get his breath he exclaimed, "Well, you are the same old Patch as ever; but give me a chance to breathe, dear."

"No, I shan't," said Patch; "I shall kiss you for the next hour, you dear old handsomest fellow in the United States!"

Just then she caught sight of the dogs and the small boy, who lay with his arm around the neck of his canine friend, looking on with a pleased expression.

Patch was at the boy's side in a moment, and, standing him on his feet, exclaimed, "What a cunning little monkey! What's his name, Harry, and where did you get him?"

"I captured him in war," replied Harry, "and his name is *Bene Trovato*."

"Poor little thing!" said Patch; "perhaps his mother is crying her eyes out now about him. Come, Benny, let's go into the kitchen and get our little hands and face washed. Have you any mother, Benny?" The boy said nothing, but brushed away a tear from his eye with his dirty little hand.

"Why don't you speak, you little monkey?" said Patch; "haven't you any tongue?"

The little fellow shook his head. "Mercy on us!" exclaimed Patch, "the child is dumb." The boy laid down by his canine companion, and Harry commenced to tell his adventure on the road.

At that moment there came a loud knock at the library-door, and Mr. Morton rose to see who was there. "Bless the people," said Patch, "I wish they would stay away; some stupid old bore, I'll warrant, that nobody cares to see."

"Why, Angelina!" said her mother, reprovingly.

"Yes, mamsy," said Patch, "I know; but it's so provoking when Harry has such interesting things to tell us."

At that instant Mr. Morton returned, ushering in Mr. Vere Saye, who was immediately introduced to Harry and informed that he was just about to recount some interesting particulars of an event that had occurred on his way up from the landing.

"Yes," said Mr. Vere Saye, "I happen to know something about it, you know. I saw the lieutenant go by with his dogs, and recognized the boy as one whom I saw on the shoulder of a stroller, and, seeing blood on the dogs, I took in the situation at once. Mr. Eton and I rode down to see what had happened, and found a place where the ground was all torn up, and there were clots of blood here and there. We followed a bloody trail down hill directly toward the water. The villains no doubt had a boat lying near by, as there was the mark of a boat's keel in the mud, and they left an old bloody jacket that we held as evidence."

"Thank God!" then said Harry, "I didn't kill the fellow."

"Oh, do come, Harry, tell us all about it," exclaimed Patch, unable to conceal her impatience. "Mr. Saye, please sit down, and let Harry tell his own story."

The latter, thus pressed, gave a complete account of his late adventure, which was eagerly listened to by all. The little boy, moved by curiosity, approached Harry's chair, looking up into his face with his large dark eyes, now and then nodding his head and smiling approvingly as Harry told the story in detail.

"There lies the key to a mystery," said Mr. Vere Saye. "If the child could talk, young as he is, he could be the means of bringing to light some deep iniquity. I only wish I was a detective, just to have the pleasure of hunting down those fellows, using the boy as a clew to catch them. The boy has been deprived of the power of speech, and is used by a gang of robbers for the purpose of putting him through a window-pane after the glass is removed, so that he can open the outer doors and let in the thieves. In England we would soon ferret out the fellows, but your detective system in this country is of small value. From what I am told, I imagine the fellows are in very little danger of being arrested."

Just as Mr. Vere Saye uttered these words Mr. and Mrs. Eton, accompanied by Flossy, walked into the room.

"I can't agree with you there," said Mr. Eton; "we have the finest detective system in New York of any place in the world."

You Britishers always think you have everything better than anybody else. Don't you have house-breaking in London?"

"Certainly we do," replied the Englishman, "but London is larger than a dozen New Yorks, and, of course, we have a great number of thieves."

"All owing," said Eton, "to your bloated aristocracy owning all the land and not leaving any for the poor to work. If the people had a chance to till the ground there would be fewer thieves. All our professional thieves come from England. We have none in the rural districts."

"And yet," said Mr. Vere Saye, "the thieves can come here and have all the land they want to till. It seems they prefer stealing to working."

"Our free institutions soon cure all that," said Mr. Eton. "As soon as the emigrant sees the highest positions open to him he hopes to reach them."

"Perhaps," said the Englishman, "after the exiles have served a term or two in the penitentiary they may get into Congress, and, now I think of it, I remember some time ago hearing of one of your members of Congress who sold out the navy and pocketed some millions of dollars, on the strength of which he ran for the Senate. Your free institutions are altogether too liberal. In England a robber of that kind would pass at least twenty years of his life in looking through the bars of a prison. You remember that even Lord Bacon's great name didn't save him when he was found guilty of malfeasance in office."

"Well, I don't care," said Mr. Eton, who was not much on argument. "I go to sleep nights now in perfect comfort. I know that the chief of our police has his men on watch in every quarter of the city, and then I have a safe that will defy all the thieves in the world."

"Yet," said Mr. Vere Saye, "I shouldn't be surprised if you awoke some morning to find yourself robbed."

Mrs. Eton here interrupted the conversation, and had to be told all the story over again, while Flossy caressed the interesting though dirty little captive. Then she and Patch took him to the kitchen and gave him a complete ablution, much to the benefit of his personal appearance.

Patch remembered some clothes that had belonged to her brother in his early youth, and, running up-stairs, soon returned with a supply sufficient for the necessities of *Bene Trovato*, who shortly

appeared attired in a laced shirt, red stockings, and his chestnut curls surmounted with a crimson fez with blue silk tassels.

The company were astonished at the beauty of the little waif, now that he was dressed in clean clothes, and he was handed around and kissed by all the ladies.

The little one bore his honors unflinchingly, and seemed delighted with his new prospects, while Jupiter, which had carried the youngster on his back from the battle-field, eyed him despondingly from a distance, as if the boy had grown too distinguished for him to associate with any longer.

Just as the company passed in to tea Louise Morton returned from a ride, in company with Edgar Lane. She had been to visit a Mrs. Ellsmere, who lived about five miles distant, and, as she entered the room, her cheeks blooming and her eyes brightened with the ride, Harry thought he had never seen anything so beautiful in his life, unless, perhaps, it was the fair being who had lately left a deep impression on his mind.

Harry approached Louise affectionately, but, throwing her hat upon the sofa, she held out her hand to him with "How do you do, Harry? So you are here at last with your menagerie," and she looked contemptuously at the dogs.

"Louise," said Harry, "is that all you have to say after a three years' absence? Haven't you a kiss for one who has been away so long?" and he looked very much mortified.

"Oh, you know I'm not gushing, Harry, like Patch," said Louise. "Patch does enough of that kind of thing for two of us; but you may kiss me if you like. I didn't know you had been gone so long; it seems only the other day, and, if I remember rightly, you told me you hoped I would mend my manners when you saw me again. Do you think them improved?" she asked, cynically.

"Oh, sister," said Harry, "can you remember such trifles after the lapse of years? Salt water with me has washed out any little asperity I might have had in days gone by."

"But I," she replied, "have had no salt water to wash out mine; on the contrary, they are washed in deeper than ever."

"Louise," said her father, "you forget yourself."

"Yes, papa?"

"And you forget that Mr. Vere Saye and Mr. Eton and Miss Carrolton have not been noticed by you."

"Yes, papa? We see each other every hour in the day."

As she said this she flung a look of defiance at Mr. Vere Saye, who coolly remarked, "Miss Morton is always so jolly, one can forget being overlooked on her brother's arrival, and the joy she must feel at seeing him again."

This cut made Louise more angry than ever, and she regarded the speaker with one of her cold, steel looks—enough to freeze the blood in his veins. The look said as plainly as possible, "I hate you!" But Mr. Saye only smiled, and said nothing.

Louise seemed to be in one of her worst moods. Something had gone wrong on the ride, and she was for the moment at war with all the world. Her appearance marred the pleasure of the evening, though every one else seemed determined to be happy notwithstanding what had occurred.

As to the beautiful boy, sitting at the tea-table, she merely pointed at him and asked, "Who is that?"

"That," answered Patch, "is Benny, whom Harry rescued from some robbers. He is dressed up in some of Harry's youthful clothes. I wish you could have seen him in his old duds."

"A pauper!" said Louise. "How long is it since the poor-house was opened and the inmates invited to tea at Hawks' Roost? Papa, have you changed your *rôle*?"

"No," said Mr. Morton, "I never change my *rôle*, as you will find if you live long enough; but I will stake my existence that this child has good blood in his veins. He has an aristocratic appearance from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot. He seems perfectly at home in polite society, and is certainly much better behaved than some of us." Mr. Morton looked keenly at his daughter, who only said,

"Yes, papa?" and subsided for the moment.

"What a hateful character!" thought the Englishman.

"What a disappointment she is to me after three years' absence!" thought Harry.

"Poor Louise must be ill," said Flossy to Mrs. Eton. "I am sure if I had such a handsome brother whom I hadn't seen for three years I should feel like eating him."

"Louise is simply nasty," replied Mrs. Eton. "She would like to eat up only those whom she hates, and I believe she hates her brother."

"For my part," said Patch, "I think Louise is like Minerva—without a heart." Patch was delighted to show her knowledge of the heathen mythology, which she was studying under Miss Schwartz.

"But," said Harry, "you haven't heard half of my adventures. I haven't had time to tell you all that has occurred." Patch was on his knee in a moment with her arms around his neck.

"Do tell us some more," she said.

Flossy, very much interested, looked into his eyes. "I declare," she whispered to Mrs. Eton, "he is the sweetest fellow I ever met."

"Flossy," said Mrs. Eton, "you are incorrigible; you'd better ask him if he is engaged."

"I know he isn't," said Flossy. "He has had no chance, and I am sure he wouldn't engage himself to one of those horrid half-negroes in the West Indies. He has been looking at me out of the corner of his eye."

"Do go on, Harry," said Patch. "I am dying of curiosity."

"Well," said Harry, "when I went on board the steamboat this morning my dogs behaved in the most unaccountable manner. There was a young lady sitting by herself, and they lay down at her feet, seeming to take her under their protection. They followed her every movement, and when she changed her seat they planted themselves at her side. When we reached the landing at Saugerties the young lady stepped upon the plank to go ashore; it turned, and she was suddenly thrown into the water, but she was hardly overboard before the dogs were at her side, and soon landed her safely upon the beach. I picked her up in my arms and ran with her on board the steamboat. Dr. Preston, who was on board, took charge of her, and she was soon as well as ever."

"That doctor is an old tadpole," said Patch. "I'll bet a chicken he'll want to doctor you, Harry, with his *morus nuticolis* as soon as he gets hold of you. His favorite remedy for toothache is to seat the patient on a hot stove with his mouth full of cold water, and wait until it boils."

"Patch," said her father, "your descriptions are far from elegant. Miss Schwartz must be talked to."

"Yes, papa," said Patch as she went over to her father and kissed him, whispering, "he really does look like a tadpole," and back she flew to Harry's knee.

"I never," continued Harry, "saw anything so beautiful as this young lady. If she had been sculptured in marble her form could not have been more perfect, and a painter could scarcely have done justice to her features. Dr. Preston said she bore a strong likeness to Louise, and, now that I recognize the resemblance, it is indeed

striking. Were I to meet them together I could hardly tell them apart. The only difference I notice is that the young lady's hair is a golden brown."

Louise's eyes flashed fire. "Some milliner's apprentice, I have no doubt. She carried her advertising card in her greasy reticule, and gave you one at parting, I presume."

"No, Louise," said Harry, quietly, "she was a thoroughbred lady. Her manners were perfect, and her conversation showed education and refinement."

"And yet," said Louise, with one of her dangerous looks, "you are afraid to show her advertising card; and as for your knowledge of thoroughbreds, I doubt if your cruise among the mulattoes of the West Indies has enlightened you much in that respect. If my memory serves me, you were not very choice in your acquaintances in your youthful days."

"Louise," said Mr. Morton, "this is intolerable. Don't forget your duties to your company and the respect you owe to your brother." Louise's lip curled higher than ever, but she said nothing.

"No, Louise," said Harry, patiently, "she had no advertising card. She thanked the doctor and myself, and when I asked her name she gave it to me."

"Oh, tell us her name, Harry," said Patch; "I am dying to know it."

"I am not pledged to secrecy," said Harry, "and the name is a very simple one—Mary Gale."

If a bolt of lightning had suddenly fallen into the midst of them it could hardly have produced a greater excitement than did the announcement of this name. Mrs. Morton jumped up from her chair and gasped, "Mary Gale! Why, that was—" She stopped suddenly, for her husband's eye was fixed sternly upon her, while he became deadly pale.

"Mary Gale!" said Mr. Vere Saye, anxiously; "are you sure that was the name?"

"You may have misunderstood the name," said Mr. Morton to Harry, his lip quivering as he spoke.

"No, sir," said Harry, "I can not be mistaken, for I read the young lady's name on her traveling-bag. It's a common enough name, I am sure."

"Your heroine," said Louise, "seems to have created some excitement. Didn't she offer you her address? It would have been in keeping with the whole romantic incident."

"No," replied Harry, "she did not, and it was not the part of a gentleman in me to gratify my curiosity by asking it."

"As Harry says, the name is a common one," said Mr. Morton in a hollow voice. The company were struck with his emotion. "The name," he said, "is connected with some early associations of Mrs. Morton and myself, and I hope it will not be mentioned again. This young person could not be connected with our acquaintance, who died more than twenty years ago; did she not, Eleanor?"

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Morton, "more than twenty years ago," and she arose and staggered toward the door. Her husband sprang to her assistance and helped her from the room.

"Courage, courage, Eleanor," he said. "Don't give way; everything depends on you." He returned to the parlor to make excuses to the company. His face was pale; he had evidently endured a severe shock.

It would have been useless to try and convince the company that there was not some mystery involved that the Mortons did not want discussed; but Mr. Morton did his best to turn the matter off.

"I am sorry," he said, "to have to apologize for Mrs. Morton, who will not be able to come down again to-night. She is very nervous, the name of the young lady having revived recollections of the past that are not agreeable; therefore I beg that the matter be not again referred to."

"And yet," said Mr. Vere Saye, "I would give anything to find this Miss Mary Gale. I would esteem it a great favor if you would give me any information regarding persons of that name. My errand to this country is principally on this account."

Mr. Vere Saye could not help noticing that Mr. Morton grew paler than ever. "I can not tell you anything that would help you in any way," he said. "The person I knew died some twenty years ago, and could not by any possibility have been related to any one in whom you are interested. The deceased was in a position of life in which you or your friends could have had no interest."

"Let me ask you one question," said the Englishman. "Had this person any children?"

"None whatever," said Mr. Morton, looking his questioner calmly in the face, while his soul was torn by conflicting emotions at being called upon to answer questions in regard to a matter evidently intensely painful to him.

"I must try and find the young lady at all hazards," said Mr.

Saye as he walked off to join the young people, who were trying in vain to be cheerful, now that all cheerfulness had been taken out of them.

At length Mrs. Eton said she must go, and requested Mr. Vere Saye to accompany her party in case they should encounter any stragglers, for she had not much faith in Mr. Eton's prowess in such a contingency.

On their arrival at Mrs. Eton's "Dove-cote" Flossy was asked to walk in and wait for her father, but Mr. Carrolton had already arrived from the city, and was waiting in the parlor, much to the satisfaction of Mr. Eton, who was anxious to learn the price of cotton.

"Cotton is firm," said Carrolton, "but here is something in the paper to interest you—an account of another great robbery."

"Ah," said Eton, "some fool, I suppose, who wouldn't follow my example and get a proper strong-box made. I defy the devil to rob me."

"Read it," said Mr. Carrolton; and Mr. Eton read as follows: "Bold Robbery!!! We learn that last night the counting-house of Eton & Co. was entered by burglars, who broke open his magnificent back-action, stone-defended, burglar-proof strong-box and abstracted a large amount of money therefrom.' This is impossible!" exclaimed Eton, jumping up; "it's a hoax!"

"Read on," said Carrolton; "or shall I read for you, as you seem excited?"

"No," said he, "I'm not excited; but I don't believe a d—d word of it."

"And, husband, dear," said Mrs. Eton, "even if the story is true, why should you get excited? The house of Eton & Co. can stand it."

"All I have in the world," said Eton, "is in that safe. But it's a lie—a hoax—and I won't believe a word of it until I see for myself."

"Let me read it," said Carrolton. "'When the clerk came in the morning he found the watchmen employed to guard the premises hatched in their bunks, fast asleep, having evidently been drugged. Their double-barreled guns lay near them with the loads drawn. The strong-box had been opened by a key and left open.'"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Eton, whose coolness was fast evaporating, "the outer door; that might happen; but the citadel—no one could have got into it—never! Carrolton, read on."

"The robbers, by some process known only to themselves,

opened all the iron doors leading to what our townsman calls the citadel, and, as the doors were not injured, they must have been furnished with keys. The thieves seem to have been waggishly inclined, as they left a memorandum stating that they had only taken seventy thousand dollars, and would call again.'"

At this point Mr. Eton fairly howled, and tore up and down the room like a madman. "Why, d—n it, Mr. Carrolton, that's the profits on two ships' cargoes, and the Lord knows when I can make it up again. I'm a ruined man. Fanny, we must take a smaller house—no more dinners, no more breakfasts—and d—n me if I ever pay Deville that supper."

"Let me continue," said Carrolton. "The fellows must have been friendly to you. Just hear the winding up; it's quite funny."

"Funny, the devil!" exclaimed Eton. "I don't see any joke about it."

"'After taking the seventy thousand dollars in gold and notes,'" continued Carrolton, reading, "'they posted a placard on the outer door to the following effect: "Job Eton, we take seventy thousand dollars to punish you for your meanness. We found your wife's diamonds, appropriated on a former occasion, to be French paste, valued in Paris at thirty-five hundred francs. So we take forty thousand dollars to pay us for that disappointment. Then you were so mean as to draw thirty thousand dollars from Morton's bank when a run was made upon it. So we take thirty thousand dollars to punish you for that. Try and do better, or we will visit you again.'"

"It's an infamous lie," roared Eton. "Those diamonds were of the first water. Carrolton, read on."

"'Knowing that the house of Eton & Co. can stand any amount of shaving, we shall not hesitate to call again when we may happen to be short of funds. We recommend our friend Job to buy a dog in place of the two old women he depended on to defend his premises.'"

By this time Mr. Eton was quite subdued. He sat with his face buried in his hands, when his wife added the final feather to the camel's overburdened back.

She stepped up to her spouse, and, pulling his hands away from his face, said, sternly, "Mr. Eton, is it true that you have degraded your wife by making her wear imitation diamonds, and that I am to be held up as the laughing-stock of all New York? You old wretch! I could scratch your eyes out!"

"Why, my dear Fanny, it's all a lie. I never—"

"I don't believe a word you say," said Mrs. Eton. "I see through you now, and will never trust you again. Think how fondly I loved you, yet you made me wear paste when I thought I was wearing the finest set of diamonds in town. I shall go to Paris by the next packet, stay there three years, and entertain handsomely, and people will know that, although you are mean enough to palm off paste diamonds on your wife, she knows how to entertain as a millionaire's wife ought to. I'll stay abroad until my heart recovers from this dreadful blow. O husband! how could you treat me so when I gave you all the pure, fresh feelings of my virgin heart—you whom I loved so much?" and she burst into tears.

Mr. Eton was almost beside himself when the Englishman broke in: "So much for your boasted police force in New York city. Such perfection can only exist under the free constitution of this great country, where the eagle screams and the British lion runs away in terror at the sound; where a statesman can steal a whole navy and still be a popular leader of his party. It's enough to make a man die laughing. I told you how it would be, my dear sir."

The Job of our story had not the patience of his Scriptural namesake, and he broke out: "D—n it, Mr. Vere Saye, you are piling it on too strong. Didn't we lick you clean off the sea in our last war? and in our next we'll plant a barrel of powder in the middle of your dirty little island and blow you all to kingdom come. The house of Eton & Co., I'll have you to know, can stand twice as great a loss as this, and can hold its own with the best houses in London or elsewhere. It's an infernal lie about those diamonds being paste—got up to injure my reputation. Fanny, my darling, you shall have another set by the packet Henry Clay that will beat everything in the country, and you can get them tested by Bullion & Co."

"O my darling ducky!" said Mrs. Eton, "I knew you wouldn't see my heart break, and I shall love you better than ever. I won't go to Paris, and I won't flirt with the young men."

"Then, darling," said Mr. Eton, "order the carriage to be at the door in time to reach the next boat, for I must be in the city to-morrow as soon as possible." Then the company bade them good-night and departed—Flossy and her father for their cottage, and Mr. Vere Saye for the "Dove" tavern.

Mr. Saye had no sooner reached his room than he took from his trunk a small bundle, from which he drew out a child's suit of clothes marked "C. G." on the waistband. The cap was marked "T. G." on the inside lining. From the pocket of the dress he took a white handkerchief marked in faded letters "Mary Gale." Mr. Vere Saye had carried these relics with him for more than twenty years, through all the vicissitudes of life, which in his case had been many.

"The first clew I have yet had," said he, "to the mystery of my birth and name. I wonder who this girl can be. The name is by no means a common one, as Mr. Morton would pretend; and why all this excitement on the part of himself and wife at the mere mention of the name? There is something mysterious in it all, but I will ferret it out in good time."

Mr. Vere Saye carefully locked up his treasure, and went to bed.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AGNES AND MARY GALE.

TWENTY years have passed since we have heard anything of Agnes Gale, whom we left at Gale's Point, sitting with her little daughter by the graves of Samson Goliah and Betsy Jane, with no object in life except the welfare of the little atom of humanity at her side, then just learning to lisp the name of mamma.

Agnes, when she lost her mother, her two boys, her husband, and finally her true and tried old friends, thought there was nothing else worth living for, and would have mourned away her life over the graves of her two dear friends, forgetful of the claims upon her of the little girl that was just beginning to toddle around the room. But gradually life seemed to be more endurable, as all the love she had possessed for the lost ones gradually centered in her daughter.

And so time wore on at Gale's Point, where Agnes and little Mary and the old housekeeper lived together day after day and month after month, Agnes learning to bow to the dispensations of Providence, and teaching by example to those around her the true principles of Christianity.

As regarded the necessities of life, Agnes had no fear of the future, for she understood, when her brother-in-law Charles left for China, that she had ample means in bank, and would receive six hundred dollars quarterly—a sum more than ample for her wants. She knew that Samson Goliath had left a nice little sum invested somewhere, and that when the estate was settled she would be provided for fully.

As her child was the owner of Gale House, they were always certain of a roof over their heads. After all, she thought she had much to be thankful for, as poverty was not added to her other misfortunes.

When Agnes felt her mind a little more at ease, she sent for the lawyer who had been left in charge of her affairs, in order to learn exactly how matters stood.

The lawyer informed her that there was no estate except the homestead; that, previous to his sailing for China, Charles Gale, as trustee, had converted all investments into cash, which he had no doubt taken to China as the best place to invest it; that he had left two years' salary in bank for Agnes, thinking, no doubt, that amount would be ample for her support until he could return or send remittances.

The property had thus all gone down with the ship. Five thousand dollars—the amount in bank—could not last many years even with the greatest economy, and poverty stared Agnes in the face.

She offered Gale House for sale, but no one wanted it on any terms. Nothing but ill luck had followed it ever since it was built, and it would bring, it was thought, misfortune on all who lived in it.

Agnes had no superstitious fears, and did not really regret having to remain for the present in a place endeared to her by many happy recollections.

About eighteen months after the loss of the *Nimrod*, Agnes received an anonymous letter, cautioning her to take great care of her little girl, as there was a plot on foot to steal the child. The writer advised her to go to some obscure part of the country and live under an assumed name. But where could she go? She knew of no one outside of Manchester, and she was utterly unfitted to go out into the world and buffet with its hardships.

Her lawyer, to whom she showed the letter, saw that, although the words were misspelled, the meaning was well expressed, and he gave as his opinion that it was a disguised handwriting. "It is a scheme for extorting money, no doubt," said he, "and you will

soon receive another asking for it, as a security against your being troubled again."

The lawyer advised her to stay where she was for the present, and not to mention the receipt of the letter to any one. Upon a closer examination of the epistle, the water-mark—"Crips, Albany"—appeared in one corner of the sheet in letters so faint as to be hardly distinguishable.

A month passed away before anything further occurred.

One night in December a storm was raging around Gale's Point. The sleet rattled like buckshot against the shutters, and the house shook so violently in the wind that Agnes became alarmed and clasped her little daughter closer to her bosom. She thought she had never experienced so fierce a tempest; it brought to mind the storm in which her husband had perished. "It was in such a storm as this," she said, "that husband, brother, and sister, and all our wealth went to the bottom of the ocean."

Agnes became so nervous that she was obliged to summon the housekeeper, who, quite as much terrified as herself, was glad of the opportunity for companionship. "God help the poor sailors on such a night as this, Mrs. Gale!" she said; "in all my experience I have never seen such weather in this place." As she spoke, a tree was torn up by the roots and dashed against the front door with such force as to break it in. The storm howled through the entry, which was now rapidly filling with rain and sleet. It seemed as if ten thousand Furies were at work downstairs tearing everything to pieces. The cold penetrated to the upper floor, and all the clothing they could put on did not suffice to keep the inmates warm.

Suddenly the housekeeper exclaimed, "I smell smoke, as if wood-work was on fire." Agnes held her child close to her bosom and opened the chamber-door, when the smoke burst into the room, almost choking them.

"Come," said Agnes to the housekeeper, "the house is on fire. It only needed this to make our case deplorable indeed."

The old housekeeper was almost fainting, and so bewildered that, if left to herself, she would have fallen a victim to the flames. But Agnes, with a strength and resolution that astonished herself, urged her along to the front door, which they reached just as the flames leaped up the stairs. In another moment the whole upper part of the house was ablaze.

Agnes bent her footsteps toward the old gardener's cottage, a

few yards distant, carrying her child and urging the old housekeeper along, while the storm beat down on her devoted head.

When the gardener was awakened he found Gale House all in a blaze, and the forms and features of the wretched fugitives as visible in the glare as if it were daylight. They were made as comfortable as possible, but the poor old housekeeper had received so great a shock from cold and fright that she died before morning. Agnes's last friend on earth was thus taken from her at a time when her assistance was most needed.

The flames rushed through Gale House till it seemed as if all the fires of hell had been let loose to destroy this unlucky mansion. The flames leaped from room to room, burst through the windows, and chased each other with demoniacal delight. The shore for two miles was brilliantly illuminated, and two schooners, under bare poles, lying broadside to wind, were brought in view, their spars and rigging reflecting the light. The men on board, roused by the unexpected fire, springing up suddenly as if for their special benefit, hoisted the head of the forestay-sails, and, putting their helms up, in a few moments were safe at anchor under Gale's Point, instead of being thrown in wrecks on the shore.

The house, all alight, having performed this friendly office, burned fiercely for half an hour longer, the storm hurling the burning rafters for an immense distance through the air.

The flames seemed to cling even to the solid granite walls of the house, lengthening out the agony of Agnes's mind, who prayed that the end might come quickly. She bore this misfortune as she had borne all her other ills, although she saw nothing before her but the direst poverty for herself and child, who now lay sleeping quietly on the gardener's bed, its beautiful face lighted up by the flames shining through the window.

Finally the walls fell in with a tremendous crash, the sudden darkness that followed proclaiming that the elements had gained the victory over the strongest habitation ever built in that part of the country.

Agnes now fully realized the situation. The only shelter she owned in the world was the little hut in which she now rested. Not a spare dollar was left her, for her last quarter's allowance had gone into the flames.

She knew not what to do. It was not until morning dawned that she found her friend the housekeeper was dead, this blow adding another pang to the many she had already borne. But she was

astonished at her own endurance, as she proceeded to prepare the body of the old housekeeper for the grave. "Poor thing!" said she, "I have not even money enough to bury her; she will have a pauper's grave."

The fire had awakened some of the people in the village, and the church-bell had tolled. Several men started for the fire, but the violence of the storm was so great that very few had the hardihood to persevere, and they arrived only when the house was a ruin.

One old man, more thoughtful than the rest, repaired to the scene in the morning with a covered wagon, some blankets, and a bottle of New England rum, which he regarded as a specific for all the ills that flesh is heir to. As he neared the house he saw the form of the old gardener seated against a tree. The old man had started for the village and had sunk down and died, overcome by the wind and cold.

When the good Samaritan reached the gardener's hut he found Agnes sitting calm and composed, with her babe in her lap, waiting for the worst to come. She thankfully accepted the provisions the old man had brought, for little Mary was beginning to get hungry.

"Now, missus," said the old man, "you've still a home, for my house is open, and my wife will make you welcome."

Agnes thanked him warmly. "I will go," she said, "but I can not leave *her* in the cold; she is dead, but she would not have left me." So the old man deposited the body of the housekeeper in his wagon, and, when all was ready, Agnes left the spot where the happiest as well as the most miserable days of her existence had been passed.

The old man's wife, who was a Quakeress, received Agnes kindly and assigned her a neat little room. "Daughter," she said, "thee can have this home as long as thee likes, and when thee comes to thy own again we shall be sorry to lose thee." Agnes thanked the good woman for her kindness, and slept soundly that night, with her child hugged to her bosom.

Next day the villagers came with offers of service, and several of her acquaintances wished her to make a home with them; but the old man and his wife were unwilling to let her go, and she was perfectly contented to remain with them.

The next day Agnes sent for her lawyer, and asked him to tell her what she had to depend upon.

"You have," said he, "about one thousand dollars left in bank,

and that is all, for Gale's Point wouldn't bring a hundred dollars. People are superstitious about it. You should leave these parts and try with your talents to make a living in the city. But I will speak more fully when I return from Gale's Point, where I am going to take a look."

When the lawyer reached the scene of the fire he found nothing but a heap of ruins, but, on looking around, he saw half buried in the snow a tin-can that had recently contained turpentine, and near it a bunch of tow. "This means that an incendiary has been at work," said he to himself. There were wheel-marks leading from the place toward the village, but so mixed with others that it was impossible to trace them far.

When the lawyer returned to Agnes he said: "I have learned enough to know that it is not safe for you to remain in this part of the country. You must go elsewhere and lose your identity. To be plain with you, somebody is seeking your life and that of your child. Do you suspect any one?"

"No," returned Agnes. "Why should any one wish to harm me? I have never injured anybody, and surely no one could be so wicked as to harm this sweet babe."

"I am a practical man, Mrs. Gale," said the lawyer, "and feel it my duty to put you on your guard. You must live somewhere under an assumed name, where you can not be identified until your daughter is old enough to take care of herself. I will go with you to New York and put you under the care of a lawyer—a friend of mine—who will assist you with his advice and, if necessary, with his purse."

"Oh, no," said Agnes, "I must always be independent. I have talents by which I can support my daughter and myself, thanks to my good mother, who taught me many useful things; but I shall be glad to have the advice of your friend."

So it was settled that she should leave Manchester immediately, as the lawyer did not think her safe where she was.

Agnes parted with her kind friends with great regret. They were very sorry to lose both her and little Mary, who had wound herself strongly about their hearts.

So Agnes, under the assumed name of Agnes Samson, went to New York, where she was introduced to an old lawyer named Bernard, who secured for her two neatly furnished rooms in John Street. She moved from these quarters and occupied a number of other apartments at different times, but finally returned to her old rooms,

which had been improved and refurnished. For the last five years she had again assumed her rightful name, as she was never quite contented under an assumed one, and she loved the sound of the name that had been her husband's.

In the second story of No. 689 John Street, in a pleasant sitting-room adorned with some pretty water-colors and simple ornaments that gave a home-look to the apartment, sat, by the light of an astral lamp, a young and beautiful girl framing a water-color drawing in most artistic style. A lady, somewhat tall and of a pallid complexion, was looking at the artist. Her luxuriant hair was white as snow, while a pair of large dark eyes illuminated a sweet face, but one that had evidently seen grief in its worst forms. The two were Agnes Gale and her daughter Mary, the young lady who was the subject of Harry Morton's adventure on board the *Rip Van Winkle*.

"My darling," said Agnes, "you have done that drawing beautifully. I think it your *chef-d'œuvre*; and the frame is certainly a masterpiece of decoration. Where do you get all your taste?"

"Why, mamma," said Mary, "all I have in the way of talent I inherited from you."

"Ah, my dear child," said Agnes, "you inherited it from one whom you never saw—your dear father. He had all the talents you possess in an eminent degree. But tell me what is the subject of your picture, and whence did you draw the inspiration, if I may so express myself?"

"Well, mamma, I dreamed it. The picture represents a ship coming into port with all sail set and with a signal up for a pilot. That schooner is the pilot-boat launching a small boat, and the man in the ship's chains has thrown a line to the small boat, which will be pulled alongside while the ship is under full sail—a dangerous performance if not skillfully executed. Those people crowding to the side of the ship have been a long time away from home, and are anxiously looking for the pilot. That's the captain with a trumpet in his hand. I intend soon to paint a companion-picture to this—a ship stranded on the coast of New Jersey. This picture I will call 'Expectation,' the second, 'Disappointment'—the two phases of life that make up the sum of our existence."

"But how beautifully you have executed the details of the drawing—all the tracery of ropes and rigging! and how cleverly you have managed the lights and shadows! I never could do anything equal to this."

"Yet, mother, you taught me all I know."

"But how did you acquire a knowledge of the ropes and sails?"

"Why, mother dear, I procured a copy of Darcy Lever's "Sheet Anchor," and before I commenced a marine picture I learned the names of all the ropes and sails in a ship. But I wasted a great deal of paint and paper before I reached my present state of perfection, as you are pleased to term it. This picture is, I assure you, born of disappointment enough to almost dishearten me from attempting to paint its companion."

"My dear child," said Agnes, "ours is but a life of disappointment from the beginning to the end, yet the greatest works in the world have been perfected after repeated obstacles have been conquered. It is the very disappointments we encounter that makes success so sweet when we at last achieve it. I know this from my own experience. At one time misfortunes so accumulated upon me that I thought myself accursed, yet by patience and perseverance I have been enabled to get along and appreciate the good that God gives me. I am satisfied with my lot, and, while I can have my darling daughter all to myself, and see the beauty and virtue with which God has endowed her, I can have no more real disappointment on earth."

Mary kissed her mother affectionately. "You are the sweetest and vainest of mothers," said she—"so vain of me, who am but a weak reflection of yourself. I can never be so good as you are, nor bear with fortitude half the misfortunes you have endured. But your golden days are yet to come, and in the evening of life you will be amply repaid for the sorrows you have borne. I don't know why, but I feel like a prophetess speaking from inspiration."

"God grant that your prophecy may prove true, my dear child; but I have learned never to put my trust in the future, and have never hoped for more than a peaceful, quiet life with you, such as we are living now. But I am getting anxious about your health, and that pain in your side worries me. I wish for your sake we could move into the country."

"For your own sake, too, mother mine," said Mary; "for you would have some color return to those pale cheeks of yours if you could have the bracing country air for a while."

"I have been here eighteen years, Mary, but I never thought of a change before, for my health has been good, although I am not naturally robust."

"Well, mother," said Mary, "I think we had better go into the country for a while, even if we have to work the harder when

we come back. I saw an advertisement in the paper this morning, but I didn't pay much attention to it, because, if I accepted the place it offered, I should be separated a while from you."

"Get the paper and read the advertisement," said Agnes, raising no objection to the separation, and Mary read as follows:

"A lady of position is desirous of procuring the services of a young lady who will engage to instruct two pupils in French and German, and, if possible, in music, and painting in water-colors. Any young lady who will suit will be treated as a member of the family and liberally compensated for her services. Address Hawks' Roost, Catskill."

"What do you think of that, mother? It seems to be a favorable opportunity. The place is very salubrious, and I am satisfied I could suit the people, and keep up my engagement with them after my return to the city."

"No doubt the terms are liberal enough," said Agnes, "but rich people generally require all your time, and I should see very little of you, while you, anxious to be with me, would worry over our separation and want to run over often to look after me. That would tend to make your employers dissatisfied—that is the way of the world. Then how can I leave my French classes, that have just commenced the fall term? And then I have recently taken five new music scholars. I could not go into the country to be near you without disarranging all my plans. But I'll tell you how we can arrange it. You can go to the country for the remaining part of the season, and can spend Sundays with me. You must have a change or you will be ill. This sedentary life has already done you harm."

Mary shook her head. "What!" she exclaimed, "be away from my own dear mother a week without seeing her? Why, I never did such a thing in my life."

"But it's only for a short time, darling," said Agnes, "and then you are provided with occupation all winter, if the place suits you, and you suit the place—which I am sure you will."

Mary was finally persuaded to answer the advertisement. But before she did so Agnes thought it prudent to send for Mr. Bernard, without whose advice she never did anything. When the old gentleman heard the proposition he highly approved it. "I know Mr. Morton, of Hawks' Roost, by reputation," he said. "He is a man of great wealth and influence, and has a charming family. But Mary must go under an assumed name. I lately received a letter

from your lawyer friend, Mr. Lindsay, of Boston, in which he says you should have retained your assumed name of Samson, as inquiries have been made about you by a person in whom he has no confidence. He fears you are still threatened with danger."

"Gracious heaven!" said Agnes, "is not fate tired of persecuting me? I had better keep my darling at my side and never lose sight of her."

"No," said Mr. Bernard, "she would be safer in the care of influential friends, who have means to protect her and who could at a moment's notice invoke the arm of the law. Here she may meet danger in the street even in the daytime. It would be well for the future to have such a powerful friend as Mr. Morton, who is one of the most influential men in New York. Mr. Lindsay," continued the old gentleman, "in writing to me impresses me strongly with the necessity of your preserving a strict incognito for a time, for he feels assured that the same person or persons who set fire to Gale House are intent on doing injury to you and yours. He hopes in time to ferret out the villains, but meanwhile you must assume your old name; your daughter should appear, therefore, at Hawks' Roost as Mary Samson."

"I will be governed by your advice, my dear friend," said Agnes; "but why should any one wish to persecute such a harmless, insignificant being as I am? I am sure no one who knew my sweet child would wish to harm her."

"No one can fathom the motives that govern the human breast," replied Mr. Bernard. "The qualities you mention might be a greater inducement to the commission of a crime. It's better for your daughter that these people should neither see nor know her. Mr. Lindsay is a very far-seeing person, and he has ascertained that somebody wants to find out your whereabouts to do you harm. Now, my dear Mrs. Gale, you must follow his advice to the letter. I will communicate with him and keep you informed of all that may occur. You have faced too many misfortunes to quail before a danger that, after all, may be only imaginary. When your daughter goes out let her be closely veiled, and keep her with you in the house as much as possible."

"That decides me, then, to go into the country," said Agnes, "for the child can not stand being cooped up in the house. She is suffering now. I will answer the advertisement at once."

"The sooner the better," said Mr. Bernard, "and I will procure some letters of recommendation, such as are necessary before

you can get into those fashionable houses, although I am sure if they could see your daughter they wouldn't insist on letters."

After Mr. Bernard had departed Agnes told her daughter of the arrangement, and Mary agreed to go, and even consented to the change of name, much as she disliked any approach to untruth or mystery.

In due time the answer came to Mary's letter of application: Mrs. Morton would be pleased to see Miss Samson at Hawks' Roost.

Agnes's tears that night bedewed her pillow as she thought of the parting with her daughter. Mary, to save her mother pain, had never told her all of the story of her fall into the river, and something (she could not tell what) prevented her mentioning the young officer who bore her in his arms from the beach. There was a pleasure in thinking of him that her maidenly modesty tried to shun, yet it refreshed her spirits like pleasant breezes from the ocean.

Mary felt sad at leaving her parent, even for a day. She had never been away on an errand, even for an hour, that she did not hasten back home with winged feet to tell her mother all that she had seen.

Her preparations for departure were soon made. She took with her the most difficult and choicest pieces of music, and the most finished of her drawings, as specimens of her skill.

The morning that the letter signed "Mary Samson" reached Hawks' Roost the Morton family were at breakfast.

Mr. Morton handed the letter, unopened, to his wife, finished his breakfast, and, bidding his family good-by with his usual formality, departed in a great hurry to take the down boat, which touched at Catskill at ten o'clock. He was going eastward on business, and would be gone ten days.

After her husband had departed Mrs. Morton broke the seal of her letter and presently exclaimed, "Girls, did you ever see such beautiful handwriting as this? It's like copperplate, and the letter is so well expressed!"

"Oh, how beautiful!" exclaimed Patch; "and she speaks French and German, and plays the piano and paints in water-colors. I wonder how old she is, and if she's pretty."

Louise glanced carelessly at the letter and threw it down on the table. "Some stupid old prig, I suppose," said she, "and the old stereotyped writing-master's letter, which she paid somebody twenty-five cents for writing. Mamma, I hope you won't have any old prigs about the house. Miss Schwartz is as much as I can

stand, and I seldom come in contact with her ; but this Miss Samson, who is strong-minded, no doubt, as her name implies, will have to go over the languages with me, and I could never benefit by any instruction unless the teacher is a refined, lady-like person. I should always be in bad humor while such a person is about."

"It will no doubt be a hard thing to suit you all," said Mrs. Morton, "but I can promise one thing—no one shall come here to be thrown intimately with you unless she is perfectly lady-like and refined."

"That's enough," said Patch. "Now, mamsy, write and tell Miss Samson to hurry up, for I want to commence water-colors."

The letter to Mary was written without further discussion.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

NEW GUESTS AT HAWKS' ROOST.

SINCE the night of Harry's adventure on the road great changes had taken place at Hawks' Roost. Deville and George May had taken up their quarters at the Lamb Tavern. The officers of the Curlew were expected, consisting of Commander Ware Conrad ; the first lieutenant, Mr. Berry Sharp ; the surgeon, Dr. Bones ; and the sailing-master, Mr. Slings. Rooms were provided, and every arrangement made in regard to their comfort, and to receive them with hospitality.

Bene Trovato had become the pet of the household, and was so greatly attached to Patch that he would only be separated from her when the dogs were about. Then he would mount his friend Jupiter and gallop off at the risk of breaking his neck. The boy would stand at the back of Patch's chair, with his arms around her neck, looking at her with his great black eyes, but never a sound came from his lips. "Poor little Tot !" Patch would say, "where is your mother ?" Then large tears would well up in the boy's eyes, but smiles would soon chase them away again.

Mr. Vere Saye had seemed greatly interested in the boy, and expressed a desire to examine the parcels captured with him to see what they would develop.

"This is a rum country, by Jove !" said he to Harry Morton. "I'm writing a book on America, and perhaps may find an incident

here worth recording." Mr. Saye accordingly obtained from Harry a minute account of the whole affair. When Harry reached that part of the narrative where the man who had been knocked down talked incoherently of Bill Slicer, and the prospect of the boss giving him a dose of the cats in case he lost the boy, Mr. Saye remarked : "Of course these men were sailors ; their slang proves that ; and they were evidently under some control, and were deviating from the instructions of their chief. I presume they were river pirates—a class of thieves well known in London, who always have a vessel nominally engaged in trade that is the receptacle of their plunder."

After Harry had finished his story he and Mr. Saye examined the parcels captured from the thieves. The largest one contained a number of burglars' tools and a heavy double-barreled pistol.

"Humph !" said the Englishman, "it's lucky for you the dogs were so quick and attacked those fellows in the rear. They hadn't counted on the animals, and thought they could easily overpower you."

"These are English thieves," continued Mr. Saye ; "I judge so from the fact that their tools are of English manufacture. I've seen a lot of similar articles in England. When I was at Magdalen College, Oxford, I was one of a party of students that laid in wait at a country house to capture a gang of burglars. We succeeded, and the tools we secured were of this description. Ah ! what have we here ? A key big enough to knock a man over with, labeled 'Jakob Moses.' One of these robbers is a pal of this Jew, who probably keeps a hole somewhere, and the goods are run into his place when he is away."

"You speak," said Harry, "as if you knew all about them."

"Putting this and that together," replied Mr. Saye, "one comes to certain conclusions. I may be wide of the mark, but, at all events, there is no doubt these men are burglars. Their kit would be evidence against them in any court of justice."

"If you could only find them !" said Harry.

"We have the boy," said Vere Saye, "and he is the key to the whole mystery."

"But he can't talk," said Harry.

"True," replied the other, "but he can be taught to do so. I visited the Deaf and Dumb Asylum not long ago, and they do wonderful things in the way of making people explain themselves. The boy is evidently of good parentage—Italian or Spanish, I should say. The devilish devices of these burglars and river thieves are too

horrible to contemplate. They steal boys of tender age to put through windows or over doors, who open the front or back entrance to a house and then give them admittance. You see, Mr. Morton, we have a great deal of this kind of business going on in England; that's why I am so familiar with it. The boy has been partially mutilated about the tongue, so that he can not reveal anything. He is without speech—a mere animal; yet no doubt he will enter into what he considers the fun of stealing with great gusto, for he has no idea that it is wrong. If you say so we will experiment with him to-night and see what are his methods."

"That depends," said Harry, "upon whether Patch will lend him to us. She never lets him out of her sight, for fear the thieves will recapture him. The boy occupies a crib in her room, and Patch sleeps with one eye open watching him."

"And yet," said Vere Saye, "they will get him again in spite of all precautions, even if the boy doesn't run away of his own accord, and find his way back to his old associates. No doubt he is much more attached to his old way of living than to his present mode."

"'Pon my soul!" continued Vere Saye, "here's the little fellow's shoes and stockings wrapped up in a piece of paper with writing on it that would puzzle a lawyer. Let's try and read it, for it may contain some information."

With much difficulty the following was deciphered :

9 HUNKY DORY.

OLD CRIBBER AND SWASH BUCKLER : Your hooks and hangers are lovely. Wouldn't you have been clinky if you'd got your grapplers on to that Chinese junk? Well done, old Shiner, and right out of port. Eighty thousand shiners, you know, and twenty thousand in silk-worms. Old mud-scow wouldn't swim. Lightered her thoroughly; sent the passengers to spend the summer on Turk's Island. Saingier didn't go. Thank God, no cats this time, and the damned boy left ashore. Lots of lush, and Bill Slicer a trump. Gave every man a tickler and a hundred buzzards. Get on board or you'll never be a millionaire, which we all are.

Yours,

B. KNOCKER.

This letter had never been posted, but was evidently kept for an opportunity.

"Who could make anything out of all this jargon?" said Harry.

"Those who talk jargon, of course," replied Mr. Vere Saye; "and if you will let me keep this letter, I will make it out, even if I have to send it to England to be translated. There are plenty of fellows there who, if they ever get the run of a thing, will soon unravel it; and I'd like also to keep this big key, which may lock up as many secrets as the key of the Bastile."

"You are welcome to the whole kit," said Harry, "for I don't see what use I could make of this outfit unless I turn burglar, which at present I have no idea of doing."

"Perhaps the transition would not be so great as you imagine, for you know the naval profession is only a system of legalized piracy."

"What, sir," exclaimed Harry, indignantly, "my noble profession piracy?"

"Don't fire a broadside into me until you hear me," said the Englishman, laughing. "You Americans fly off the handle so quickly; just let me explain. Are you not brought up in the navy to think that prize-money is the chiefest blessing a sailor should pray for? And don't you hope for bloody wars and sickly seasons? Do you take any account of an old friend's life beyond scratching his name off your navy-list when he shuffles off this mortal coil? When you capture a merchant-vessel, don't you loot her from stem to stern, though perhaps the owner of the cargo never harmed your country in his life?"

"Yes," said Harry, "but that's reprisal for injuries sustained at the hands of the enemy."

"Then," said Vere Saye, "because you happen to have had a feud with John Smith, you would take the property of his relations in order to indemnify yourself?"

"But," said Harry, "these are not parallel cases. The laws of nations justify these things; it's the only way the weak have of retaliating on the strong. The laws of the land prohibit burglary."

"All laws," said Vere Saye, "should be founded on common sense, and are supposed to be made for the benefit of mankind. Do you benefit mankind by setting fire to a merchant-ship, as burglars, after robbing a house, sometimes apply the torch in very wantonness? What great difference is there between burglary and the operations of a ship's company on a hostile coast, where perhaps a large majority of the people are opposed to the war? The invaders don't even pay their victims the courtesy of opening their doors with nice-looking tools, but knock them right and left, not caring

how many innocent people may be killed. You navy people have not the excuse of burglars, who generally are ignorant ruffians that have never been taught to control their passions, while you profess to be educated Christian gentlemen, whose business it is to see in times of peace that no one on the high seas breaks the laws, while in time of war you become the greatest marauders in the world."

"But," said Harry, "we are obliged to do these things under instructions from our government."

"Yes," replied the other, "but you act very willingly. Supposing your parents had a feud with one of their neighbors; would you think it right if they should order you to set fire to his haystacks and injure his property in every way you could devise? Do you ever think of any method of ameliorating the horrors of war, or of rendering it less severe to innocent non-combatants?"

"No," said Harry; "the only way is to render the war as unpleasant as possible to the enemy's people, so that they will protest against its further continuance."

"Yes," said Vere Saye, "on the principle that, if your enemy is prostrate with a burning fever, you would harass him until his family exhorts him to beg your mercy. Or, if his house were on fire, you would fan the flames until he surrenders. He must be a subtle casuist who could convince himself of the necessity of destroying the property of private citizens to avenge the wrongs committed by a government. You might as well slaughter all the doves because the hawks happen to kill your chickens."

"I am afraid," said Harry, "that you will never convince me that making prize-money is wrong. I should only like a chance to make some."

"So the burglar argues," said Vere Saye. "He thinks it's all right to live at other folks's expense, and looks forward to a burglary just as you would look forward to running down and securing a prize."

"But what is this in bag No. 3? Ah! here's prize-money—a *rouleau* of gold—doubloons at that, a pair of diamond ear-rings, a gold bracelet. These fellows have evidently just made a raid on some one's house."

The other articles found were only burglars' tools, but each bag contained a loaded pistol.

"It's lucky for you, lieutenant," said the Englishman, "that they hadn't a chance to use these weapons, or your prospects of future prize-money would have been small. These are English

pistols. Everything proclaims these fellows to be English—their slang, their tools, and their fire-arms.”

“I am glad of it,” said Harry, “for the honor of my country. I do not want Americans to be engaged in such practices—”

“Or even taking prizes?” said Vere Saye. “My countrymen are sad fellows, I admit; they are pirates by inheritance, and it will take many centuries to eradicate the seeds of piracy, which was the distinguishing character of our forefathers. It is to be hoped that sufficient of the hardihood of our ancestors may remain to enable England to fulfill her destiny, and carry civilization to the farthest confines of the earth.”

“Don’t you suppose,” said Harry, “that we Americans will have something to do with that destiny and the civilization you speak of?”

“But what are you Americans, after all,” said the other, “but offshoots of those robber Scandinavians, who, settling in England, have made the most invincible nation on the face of the globe? As England’s power declines, the United States, with its millions of freemen, will become the greatest nation of the earth, and bid defiance to the world in arms. But that day is a long way off, and neither you nor I will live to see it; but we will live to see England dictating laws for the world. Her power and her flag will be dominant in every part of the globe, and the same robber spirit that actuated our forefathers will still exist in the person of the English burglar, who will manifest himself on all occasions, when prize-money is to be obtained, either by the ‘jimmy’ or the more effectual round shot.”

That afternoon Harry was at the landing to receive his friends, the officers of the Curlew. When the Rip Van Winkle arrived, the expected guests were all there, headed by Commander Conrad, a handsome man of thirty; Mr. Berry Sharp, the first lieutenant; Surgeon Bones, and Sailing-Master Slings.

Harry welcomed his friends, and, leading them to the carriage, they were soon whirled away to Hawks’ Roost.

The arrival of naval officers was an event in the life of the people at Hawks’ Roost. Harry Morton was the only specimen they had ever seen, and he was so prepossessing, or, as Miss Carrolton remarked, such a “conquering-looking hero,” that they naturally expected to see a lot more of the same kind come on shore from the Curlew.

Patch leaned out of the front window and stretched her neck to

catch the first glimpse of the heroes, and, when the carriage at last appeared, she hauled in her head so suddenly that she gave it a hard knock against the sash, calling out to Louise, "Here they come, the whole kit of them. Come quick, Lou!"

"I smelled the tar some time ago," said Louise, "but I haven't the faintest desire to come any closer than I can help to our country's defenders. I suppose I shall have to submit to the infliction for two weeks, but shall see as little of the heroes as possible."

"Now look here, Louise Morton," said Patch, "although you try to play the great high-cockalorum of the house, and act as if a prince wasn't good enough for you, you are just as crazy about handsome men as any girl I know. You don't this minute know which you are most in love with—Mr. Deville, George May, or Edgar Lane. Now don't let's have any more of your airs."

"Hush this instant," said Louise; "don't dare to mention Edgar Lane's name with mine."

"'Shake not your gory locks at me.' You know what I know, and if you don't behave I'll let the cat out of the bag."

"Patch," said Louise, "you are the most ridiculous child I ever knew, and so choice in your expressions!"

"Here, Benny Contralto," said Patch to her little charge, "run and see the defenders of the nation." As Commander Conrad alighted she exclaimed, "There is the handsomest man I've seen yet except brother Harry—a form like Apollo, an eye like the eagle, a nose like a warrior, a mouth that means yes and no when he says it, and a set of teeth that would cost six hundred dollars at the dentist's. Now comes the first lieutenant. I heard Harry call his name, Berry Sharp. He's a darling—hair parted in the middle, *nez retroussé*, figure dancing-dollish, complexion milk-and-water, legs inexpressible, air overpowering, age between fifteen and thirty. Miss Flossy will have the high-strikes when she sees him, and will wonder at once whether he is engaged. I shall call him Poodle, his hair is so beautifully frizzled. I am sure he had it done on board the Rip Van Winkle by the old darkey barber. What do *you* think of him, Benny Tomato?"

"Patch," said Louise, "you are too ridiculous for anything in this world."

"I know it," said Patch; "but here comes out old Dr. Sawbones. Bless me! he looks jalap all over. See his nose; he must be obliged to use the mainsail when he has a cold. One leg's shorter

than the other. No, I'm mistaken—it's longer than the other, and he walks like a jumping-jack."

"I wonder what induced Harry Morton to bring such a ridiculous set of people here," said Louise; "it's positively shameful!"

"There is old Gin Slings," broke in Patch; "only one arm. He won't suit you at all, Louise; he can only offer you one hand, and that would never satisfy *you*."

"Patch," said Louise, "do try and have a little sense. I believe I won't go down to tea."

"You had better treat Harry's friends politely," said her sister. "I am sure if he was to bring a lot of Sandwich Islanders and tell me they were his bosom friends, I'd let 'em make love to me."

"You ridiculous child, to talk of love! You'd better be thinking of your lessons—"

"As you were when you went to Madame Faucet's school," interrupted Patch.

"O Patch!" said Louise, deprecatingly.

"Patch me no patches," said her sister. "But I'll be as mean as shrimp-soup or catnip-pie if you don't make up your mind to be pleasant to Harry's friends, for the dear old fellow has set his heart on their all going away from here with agreeable reminiscences—that's the word, I believe—and you know, when you wish to do so, you can make yourself as pleasant as huckleberry-pudding."

"I must acknowledge," said Louise, "that your smiles are very beautiful. I wonder if you learned those classical expressions from Miss Schwartz."

"Never you mind," retorted Patch. "Do as I say, or you'll wish Ossa and Pelim had tumbled on you. There's classics for you."

Louise, being well aware of Patch's ability to harass her, said at last, "Well, let me alone, and I'll do my best to be polite to the creatures, though it will be a horrid bore."

Patch went off laughing, and a wonderful clatter she made in her preparations to appear at dinner. She scanned her dresses, hanging in wild confusion—not one without a rip or a tear—saying to herself: "I wonder what Poodle would like. He is about my style. Louise will either have to take Deville or George May. Whichever she doesn't happen to fancy for the evening Mrs. Eton will get. Flossy Carrolton will want Harry, whom she is very sweet upon; or, like a fickle thing, she may light upon the eagle Conrad. Mamma can entertain the doctor with full particulars of the time when we all had measles and whooping-cough. As for

old Bacchus Slings, Miss Bane will glory in him and he in her. She can tell him how near she came to being a millionaire when she owned a ten-acre lot half a mile outside of Albany, only the town grew up in the other direction and the lot was sold for taxes. Then there'll be the handsome Englishman, and there's old Eton and Mr. Carrolton. I guess I'll wear a white muslin and pink sash. I think that will make Poodle my slave for ever."

Patch had with great difficulty obtained permission to appear at the dinner-table—her first appearance in company—for she was one of the irrepressibles, and her parents never knew when she would utter one of her brusque sayings, which, though they might have the merit of originality, were sometimes very annoying to company.

Patch was now in a sad quandary. On close inspection, the white muslin dress, which she expected would bring Lieutenant Berry Sharp to her feet, was found to be split down the back. Other dresses were stained or torn so as to be quite out of the question, and she had to be satisfied with a white poplin rather the worse for wear. "If Poodle won't bite at this," she said, "he can go elsewhere; but"—surveying herself in the glass—"he'll be hard to please if he doesn't like my face and figure," and she pirouetted around the room, whistling.

When Louise and Patch were dressed they accompanied their mother to the reception-room, where the guests were to assemble. The naval officers had not yet appeared, but Deville and George May were there to greet the ladies. Then Mr. Vere Saye came in, and was introduced to Deville. As the two men shook hands they looked at each other in astonishment. Each saw in the other the counterpart of himself, the only difference being that one had the olive complexion of the Italian, the other the fair skin of the Anglo-Saxon.

"By Jove!" ejaculated Vere Saye as he held Deville's hand, "I wish I had had you at Oxford to pull next oar to mine. We could have beaten the world. Our strength not being well balanced, I pulled the other fellows round, and the coxswain had to steer against me."

"I envy you your physique, sir," said Deville; "it is magnificent."

"That's good," replied Vere Saye, "for young Hercules to remark. I think there's hardly a featherweight of difference between us, and you are the only match I've met for years." They were

indeed a splendid pair of men, and, but for the dissimilarity of complexion, might have been taken for brothers.

"Antinous is the handsomest," whispered Patch.

"Pray," inquired her mother, "which is Antinous?"

"Why, Mr. Deville, of course," replied Patch.

"What nickname have you given me?" said George May, who overheard the conversation.

"You are Prince Gold Star," said Patch, "and Miss Flossy shall be Cherry."

"A pretty name," said May, "and I'll wear it."

The naval officers next appeared with Harry, who presented them to his mother and the assembled company. Commander Conrad made an excellent impression by his fine manners, and the others were by no means so bad as Patch had represented them to be to Louise.

When Commander Conrad was introduced to Louise he thought he had never seen so beautiful a woman. He gazed so long that it almost amounted to rudeness. Louise was accustomed to admiration, yet her lip curled and she was turning away when the officer entered into a pleasant strain of conversation, which, from its novelty, interested her more than usual.

The commander had a determined air that carried great weight with it, and Louise, who was not accustomed to having any one differ with her in conversation, felt that he dominated over her. She hardly knew whether to like Conrad or hate him, and was fascinated by this new feeling of not being able to tyrannize over a man at sight.

It was as if she had drank some new kind of wine that had exhilarated her more than usual. Yet when Conrad left her side a reaction took place like that which occurs when the wine has ceased to stimulate.

It seemed very tame to Louise when afterward she had to converse with George May and Deville, who were continually telling her how beautiful she was and how exquisitely she dressed. In a short conversation Commander Conrad had impressed her more than any one had ever done on first acquaintance. Still she felt as if she'd like to hate him, as she did Vere Saye, who so far had never paid her any particular attention.

When Mrs. Eton and Flossy came in they imparted new life to the company. The strangers were delighted with these last comers, and Mrs. Morton's fears lest her party would prove a failure vanished.

When dinner was announced Mrs. Morton sat at the head of the table, and Miss Bane at the opposite end, supported by Mr. Slings and Mr. Eton. Louise had Commander Conrad, while Deville, who escorted Mrs. Eton, sat on Louise's right. George May handed in Flossy, who was disappointed in not getting Harry Morton as an escort. Patch secured her "Poodle," as she had made up her mind to do from the first. As for Mr. Carrolton, he wandered in on his own account and took the chair that was left vacant. The guests were seated in a manner to bring people together supposed to be agreeable to each other. How seldom do dinner-givers apportion their guests so that people will be in accord ! People are generally placed at table according to rank, or for some other reason that the hosts think imperative ; hence most dinners are mere formal entertainments—a bore to all concerned.

The dinner of which we write was no exception to the rule, and Mrs. Morton breathed a sigh of relief when it was over. Two people were extremely uncomfortable ; one was Deville, the other George May. It was some weeks since they had met Louise, and the country air had developed in her a beauty and freshness even superior to what she possessed before.

She was now playing a new part, and seemed to make every effort to please Commander Conrad, whom she had never seen before, scarcely noticing Deville, so eager was she in listening to the naval officer.

Remarkable as Deville was for coolness and equanimity of temper, he could hardly conceal the jealousy that was gnawing at his heart. As for George May, he scarcely heard Flossy's numerous questions, and answered them at random.

When dinner was over and the guests adjourned to the parlor, Louise adroitly led the commander to a quiet corner, where there was a sofa that would hold but two people.

Louise took no notice of her two old admirers, though she knew they loved her with their whole souls. May and Deville were aware of each other's feelings, and the former, who felt a devotion to Deville second only to the love he felt for Louise, could have resigned her to his friend, and been willing to see him bask in the sunshine of her smiles for the rest of his days ; but he was not willing that any one else than Deville should be so favored.

What, then, was their chagrin when these two saw the object of their adoration devoting herself with such warmth of feeling to a stranger !

Louise felt sure of these two men, and her heart would sometimes warm toward them, but she had never experienced that heavenly feeling of love which comes unsought and betrays itself in the mellow, quivering voice, and the impassioned look which tells a history no words could relate.

Had Louise at last succumbed, or was this but a passing fancy? Be it what it might, Deville and George were exceedingly disturbed. May sat stupidly by Flossy's side, scarcely uttering a word, and Deville wandered over to where Vere Saye was standing and entered into conversation with him.

Patch had gone out after dinner, and, having dressed *Bene Trovato* in a new suit, with his Turkish fez covering his beautiful locks, brought him in and introduced him to the company. At first the boy seemed nervous, but, on looking around, he suddenly broke away from Patch and ran to Deville (who was so busily engaged that he did not notice him at first), and, clasping him around the leg, looked up in his face with a pleased expression, laughing in his silent way.

Deville started at his touch, and, looking down, was visibly affected at the sight of the boy. Recovering himself in an instant, he inquired whose beautiful little child it was.

"He shows a singular fancy for you," said Mr. Vere Saye. "He has never noticed anybody else except Miss Angeline since he has been in the house. He comes to you as if to an old acquaintance."

"No, indeed," said Deville, "I never laid eyes on the youngster before; but children are like dogs; they know by intuition those who are kind to them. Perhaps this little fellow has mixed me up with some one who was fond of him. Who is he, and where did he come from?" Then Mr. Vere Saye related the adventure of Harry Morton.

"Vile wretches!" exclaimed Deville. "No doubt they have made this poor child suffer. What a pity Morton hadn't killed some of them!"

The child looked up into Deville's face and smiled. Deville patted his head and kissed him.

Patch now came after her little charge, but he would not leave Deville, looking up into his face with his mischievous-looking smile. When Vere Saye remarked that the men were no doubt pirates, the child drew his hand across his throat and shuddered.

Finally he consented to go with Patch, after taking an affectionate leave of Deville, who remarked to Mr. Vere Saye: "A most

singular infatuation. The boy evidently connects me with some one else."

This was the one bright spot in Deville's evening. The child, whom he did not know, seemed to cling to him, while the being for whom he would have laid down his life studiously avoided him. Poor George May hadn't even Deville's consolation to cheer him up, and all Flossy's charms could not win him from his despondency. He left the house early, without having a chance to bid Louise good-night.

Louise had wandered with Conrad off the porch, and both seemed to be studying the stars. What could these two be talking of for three long hours? They could have but few feelings in common to induce such close communion. Who knows? The commander must have been a person of very fascinating powers, to have chained the attention of Louise Morton for so long a time. Certain it is that the conduct of this girl had thrown a gloom over the evening. The young people seemed joyless, and their elders, though they sat down to cards, seemed to take little pleasure in the game. Patch was furious with Louise for monopolizing Conrad, and her mother was evidently not pleased.

When the company had departed and the family had retired to their rooms for the night, Patch flung her door open and stood with arms akimbo in rather a defiant manner.

"Well!" she said to Louise, "you've gone and done it, haven't you? You've knocked all the fat into the fire and made things generally stupid. Poor George May is so miserable he'll no doubt go to the 'Lamb' and commit suicide with a hair-pin; and as for Deville, he hasn't smole a smile the whole evening. Lou, you're an impostor!"

"Patch," said Louise, "stop your impertinence. What do I care about George May or James Deville? Haven't they tongues of their own? Please be more choice in your language, or Miss Schwartz had better give place to some other teacher."

"Haven't you been coddling those two fellows up all the spring, to the exclusion of every one else?" said Patch. "Haven't you lived, moved, and had your being through those two fellows, until you got them so dead in love with you that they don't know t'other from which?"

"Why, Patch, where do you pick up your elegant expressions?"

"Never you mind the style of my expressions, Miss Morton.

You know perfectly well what I mean, and that I am after your scalp. If you don't behave better and mind what I say, I will take it off as clean as an Indian would. First, Miss Morton, stand up and hear the indictment against you. There's dear little innocent, harmless, generous George May, who wouldn't hurt a fly. He would die to serve you, yet you treat him as if he were the vilest wretch in the country. You treat him worse than a strolling vagabond; for you might be induced to give the latter a crust of bread, but you have sent George May away to-night with as sore a heart as ever poor boy had. I just wish he'd love me as he loves you, and you'd see if I wouldn't stick to him like a chestnut-bur."

"Patch, stop your nonsense!" exclaimed Louise. "What do you suppose I want with a man whom you describe as a harmless innocent? I don't want a husband such as that. He may do as a lover to while away time, but that's all. Pray now, Patch, whom do you call my first lover?"

"What would you give to know?" said Patch, looking keenly at her sister. "Don't ask me, or I may tell you something you think, perhaps, I don't know."

"I defy you," said Louise.

"Then," said Patch, "here goes, as the bull said when he pitched into the china-shop. Do you pretend to deny that Edgar Lane has been a lover of yours for two years?—that all the time you were at Boulanger's you and he were carrying on a clandestine correspondence? And can you deny that you have engaged yourself to him, in defiance of papa's injunctions?"

Patch had got thus far in her speech when Louise sprang across the floor. "Hush, Patch!" she cried, "for mercy's sake. Don't refer to that; don't breathe it to any one, or you'll ruin me."

"Then," said Patch, "you must make me your confidante in any new love-affair you may have. I do feel bad about poor George May, because he's such a love, and when I'm eighteen, if he isn't engaged or hasn't committed suicide, I shall propose to him myself. I don't care so much about Deville; he is so big and strong he wouldn't groan if he were broken on the wheel."

"He will have to break as far as I am concerned," said Louise. "Do you know, Patch, I have met my fate—a man that has a stronger will than mine, one who won't be trampled on, and with a temper nothing can quell."

"Thank God for that!" said Patch, fervently. "We may hope to have some peace in the family when you get married. But what

are you going to do with Edgar Lane? That's a serious business."

"How much do you know about it?" exclaimed Louise, coming close to Patch and gazing earnestly at her, while that dark, glittering look we have before remarked showed itself in her eyes.

"Don't try to frighten me with your volcano looks," said Patch, "for I don't mind them. But take my advice, and avoid new loves before you are off with the old. You know, my dear elder sister, that I have ten times as much sense as you have, though I'm only fifteen, and that I've furnished you with brains for several years past."

"Patch, you are the most ridiculous child I ever knew; you talk as if I wanted brains."

"Why, Louise, you remind me of an ostrich that hides his head in the sand, and, because he can't see the hunters, thinks they can't see him. You are the most transparent creature in the world, and your transparency will bring you lots of trouble. Now, I'll bet you one of my muslins against your blue cashmere that you told that navy fellow—the Eagle, I mean—the history of your life, and that of the whole family to boot."

"I did nothing of the kind," replied Louise. "The fact is, Patch, I scarcely talked at all. I listened to that man until my soul seemed to dissolve away in the midst of his descriptions of tropical scenery and desperate adventures."

"Poor soul!" laughed Patch, "it seems to dissolve early. Why, Louise, do you know that Mr. Berry Sharp, *alias* Poodle, who parts his hair in the middle, quotes Byron and Moore by the mile, talks about tall phantoms flitting through the rigging in the mid-watches of the night, shadowed by the fitful lights in the binnacle, and the memory of joys long since departed reflected boldly on the mainsail-sheet; how those he fondly cherished were seen in the glimmering rays of the twinkling stars, and how he bore his cruel cross and the accumulated woes of the mid-watch like a ring-tailed monkey on a lee cat's-head smiling at a wet swab in a typhoon; and how he sits and gazes in the mid-watches aforesaid, with looks not uttered but understood, at the tacks and sheets lying so still and saint-like hanging to the belaying-pins? I'm sure that's just what he said, and he didn't take three hours to say it in either. For my part, I think all these navy fellows are cut out on the same pattern, and get all their ideas out of the same log-book, which Poodle tells me they write up at the end of the watch; and the fellow that comes on watch spends all his spare time in reading his

predecessor's remarks. Now, Louise, I don't go crazy over Poodle ; and why need you upset things generally because the Eagle happened to flap his wings over your head ?”

“You silly child, to compare your Poodle with my Eagle ! for that's what Commander Conrad is—an eagle among the small birds. He is as much above the ordinary men around him as the eagle is above the turkey-buzzard.”

“Is that any reason,” sneered Patch, “that you should treat your friends and mine as if they were vagabonds ? There'll come along some of these days another eagle that will soar higher than your bird ; what will you say then ? I'm getting sleepy, but must enter into a treaty with you before I throw myself into the arms of omnibus ; that is, you may listen as much as you please to Conrad, give Deville a ‘nubbin’ of corn, and let George May curl himself up at your feet and tell you how much he loves you—that won't hurt you, will it ?”

“No,” said Louise, “I will agree to that.”

“I haven't done yet,” replied Patch. “I tore the skirt off my dress as I came up-stairs just now in too much of a hurry : so you must give me that light silk you never wear ; I want it for to-morrow evening.”

“Yes, yes,” said Louise ; “and you'll never breathe Edgar Lane's name ?”

“Never,” said Patch, “if you'll throw in a pair of your white satin slippers.”

“I agree,” said Louise. “Now go to bed, you troublesome child, and don't worry me any more.”

When Deville returned to the “Lamb” he found George May lying on the bed looking the picture of despair. “Cheer up, my dear boy,” said Deville. “It's only a passing fancy ; it will wear off in a week.”

“By which time,” said May, “she will break my heart. Did you ever see anything so contemptuous as Louise's manner toward us this evening, after professing that she liked us better than any one else ? And here's a fellow she never saw or heard of before, and she won't even look at us when he is near.”

“I admit her faults,” said Deville ; “but, by heavens ! she is the most beautiful creature in the world. She has wound herself so around my heart that I can not shake her off if I desired. My life is bound to be miserable owing to that girl. She is as treacher-

ous as her eyes bespeak her. As for Conrad, he is one of nature's noblemen, and is fascinated by the beauty of Louise. Who can blame him? He must live and learn. He will pledge us yet the bitter cup when the fennel-leaf is pressed for his drinking!"

"Let him drink, then," said May. "I hope the mixture will be bitter as gall to him! For my part, I shall go away and spend my life in some remote corner of the earth."

"No, no," said Deville, "not so bad as that; let us stay and take our chances. It's not my way to give up anything, much less the woman I love. Yet I would resign my claim to you, George, if it would insure your happiness."

"So would I to you, old fellow," said May; "but I don't think either of us will ever have much to say in the matter. But good-night, old fellow; let me go to sleep. There may be a gleam of sunshine to-morrow." And so they parted.

Vere Saye sat up late after his return to the "Dove," pondering over the events of the last few days. "What a splendid creature that man Deville is!" he said to himself. "What a physique! His strength must be herculean. If that man should rise in his strength, twenty men would be tossed like so many nine-pins before him. I never before met a man that I could not conquer in a personal encounter, yet I believe that Deville could handle me."

Vere Saye rolled up his shirt-sleeves and displayed an arm worthy of Hercules. "Now," said he, "there's a biceps muscle big as a thirty-two-pound ball, the triceps muscle rises on the arm as if there were a great mole under the skin, the back muscles lie together like so many whip-ends, the whole measuring twenty inches. The fore-arm is like the arms of two stalwart blacksmiths both in one, and the muscles of the arms like bars of steel. Yet I believe that man could take me down. I wonder where he got his training. What a stroke-oar he could pull!"

"What a curious fancy that child took to Deville! He acted as if he had known him before. Perhaps it was some likeness the boy may have seen to some one else. Yet once I saw him look at the child with an expression it seemed to comprehend, and then it ran away to the young lady. This must have been entirely accidental, no doubt."

"What a beautiful girl Miss Carrolton is!" he continued to himself. "She is as far superior to Louise Morton as a lily is to a cactus-flower—one all purity and freshness, the other ready to sting

you with her prickles if you go too near her. She reminds me of a female panther I once saw that nothing could tame.

"Just to think of what a lot of plunder I have in these bags! I could break into any house in the country if I were so disposed. I think I'll give this key marked 'Jakob Moses' to a friend of mine; perhaps he will make something out of it. I don't much like the looks of old Carrolton, but his daughter is beautiful." Flossy was the last thing Vere Saye thought of that night; perhaps her figure mingled in his dreams! Who knows?

Mr. Eton had been very quiet all the evening, and took very little interest in the rubber of whist formed by himself, the doctor, Mr. Slings, and Mr. Carrolton.

When he reached home, his wife said, "Well, my darling, as you came up so late I had no chance to talk to you about the robbery."

"Ah! yes, Fanny, seventy thousand dollars gone. But I think it a hoax; some one has played a joke on me, and it will all come back again in a day or two. I don't know how they got in, but they broke nothing and didn't pick any locks. That infernal placard that appeared in the papers is all a lie, and if they expect to injure the credit of Eton & Co. they are mightily mistaken. I can buy 'em all out twice over."

"Then," said Fanny, "you can afford to get me the new light carriage I want to go shopping in; it's too troublesome to go about in the big, heavy carriage of ours."

"Humph! yes," said Eton; "better use the omnibus for the present," and he went out.

"The old bear!" exclaimed Fanny. "As if I married him to ride in an omnibus! I could have done that with poor dear Fred Foster." And she took her candle and departed.

"I do think, popsy," said Flossy to her father, "that Harry Morton is the sweetest fellow that ever lived, and Mr. Vere Saye is too handsome. I don't know which I like best; they are both splendid."

"It depends, Flossy," said her father, "which of them likes you best. Young Morton will be worth a large fortune. I know nothing about the other, except that he is a stuck-up Oxford man, who wouldn't look at you in England." With this remark Carrolton retired to his room.

"Ah me," murmured Flossy, "how many difficulties there are ! There's George May dead in love with Louise Morton ; there's De-ville with an attachment abroad, and devoted to Mrs. Eton here ; there's that naval captain throwing himself at Louise Morton's feet ; there's Harry Morton with a fortune, and his father a purse-proud aristocrat ; there's Mr. Berry Sharp—I wouldn't touch him with a pair of tongs ; there's that old sailing-master—bah ! and that navy doctor ; and I'm told that Mr. Vere Saye wouldn't look at me in England. I think," said Flossy, surveying herself in the glass, "he'd be glad enough to look at me if he could just see me now !"

She here extinguished the candle, and was soon wrapped in sweet slumber.

If Flossy could only have known what Vere Saye was thinking about her at that moment, she might not have slept a wink that night.

" Thus in sweet sleep our troubles glide away,
And hearts are fresher at the break of day ;
In dreams we reap the love we often crave,
Though daylight sends it to an early grave."

CHAPTER XXIX.

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS.

THE day after the arrival of the naval officers at Hawks' Roost was the day appointed for Mary Gale to leave home.

Any one viewing the preparations would have supposed that the young lady was bound on a long journey. It was the first real separation between Agnes and her daughter. Mary had often been away for a day or so up the Hudson, giving lessons in drawing or music ; but this parting for a week, perhaps for two weeks, almost unnerved Agnes. She wept over her daughter as if her heart would break.

"Mother," said Mary, "give up the idea of my going into the country ; it seems to distress you so."

"No, my darling," Agnes replied ; "although I am so affected, I am none the less anxious that you should keep your appointment. You will have the opportunity of making friends among the most influential people in New York, which may be of the utmost advantage to you in the future. Go, my pet, by all means, and I will

pray for you every hour. Oh, it is hard to part with you, my daughter, and I shall feel it especially at night when I miss you from my side. Then you will feel so lonesome in that great house in the country ; and what will you do in a room all by yourself ?”

“Don’t talk so, mother,” said Mary, “or you will unnerve me. I am just ready to cry now. If I find that I can not stand the separation, and that you are fretting for me, I will come home and give up the situation. If the lady has any heart she will not object to my leaving.”

“Ah, my darling !” said Agnes, “she will not be willing to let you go ; she will be too anxious to retain your services when she becomes acquainted with your talents. I not only shall not blame her, but I wish you to stay with her. You will never have another opportunity of making such friends.”

At that moment Mr. Bernard entered with a letter in his hand. “I come to show you,” he said to Agnes, “a letter from your friend Mr. Lindsay, and I recommend you to adhere strictly to his advice. He has lately received letters making inquiries with regard to yourself and daughter—whether you are still living, your address, etc. By a careful examination he is convinced that these letters, though purporting to be from different quarters, are all written by the same hand as the one advising you to move from Manchester and change your name. A person, evidently disguised, has made many inquiries concerning you in Manchester. If he intended any good, he would have called on Mr. Lindsay after having been informed by the townspeople that that gentleman could tell him all about you. Mr. Lindsay informed his correspondent that you were living with your mother’s brother in the south of France. He heard nothing further from him until a few days ago, when a letter was received asking an interview on Boston Common. Mr. Lindsay declined the interview, but invited the writer to meet him at his office. Mr. Lindsay addressed his letter, as directed, to Mr. A. B., and contrived to be present at the post-office when the stranger called for it. Although the man was evidently disguised, he thinks he should recognize him if he ever saw him again.

“Now,” continued Mr. Bernard, “we can’t tell what all this means ; but forewarned is forearmed, and you must endeavor to keep out of this man’s way. Your daughter will be safer at Hawks’ Roost than in the city. The fact that Mr. Lindsay reported you as in the south of France will perhaps throw the person, whoever he is, off the track, and he may not trouble you. Miss Mary

must be careful in answering any questions relating to her former life or her family—in fact, anything that does not bear upon the business in which she is engaged. All persons have private affairs that they do not wish to discuss, and no true lady would undertake to penetrate a reserve held by one in her employ.

“And now, my child,” said the old lawyer, addressing Mary, “be prudent and make all the friends you can. You must guard against trouble when you know that it exists; but it is sometimes hard to control our tongues, and we are trapped before we know it. I will see you to the steamboat.”

Mary bade her mother farewell, and the old gentleman escorted her to the carriage he had provided. After a short ride they reached the Rip Van Winkle.

When the boat was speeding up the river, Mary felt as if her heart would break; but gradually she became more calm, and even enjoyed the beautiful scenery through which the boat was passing. A band of strolling musicians on board helped by their cheerful strains to beguile her sad thoughts; and we will leave her to pass the hours until the boat reached Catskill.

The young people at Hawks' Roost had that morning, after breakfast, assembled on the western porch. The weather was beautiful, the air crisp and bracing. Nothing could be more beautiful than Hawks' Roost, its roof peeping out from the great oaks and elms that surrounded it, with beautiful lawns and gardens stretching away to the fields, where grazed the fine cattle that supplied milk and butter to the inhabitants of the famed dwelling.

The woods were waving and shimmering with their wealth of variegated leaves, where the partridge would take his flight from under the wayfarer's feet and go sailing off through the dense thickets to some darker recess of the forest; or the woodpecker would flit from tree to tree, the busiest inhabitant of the woods; or the gray squirrel would spring along the path and watch an intruder as if he were poaching on his preserves. Ah! could they talk to us, what pleasant tales these wild denizens of the forest would tell of the pleasant trysts, the lovers' vows, the happy hours, the moonlight promenades, which they had witnessed from their eyries!

The waving leaves seemed instinct with life, while the gleams of sun and intervals of shade, caused by the fleecy clouds passing overhead, appeared like the change of a kaleidoscope, while the murmur

of the breeze suggested the presence of fairy beings peopling the solitudes.

There was one giant oak towering above the others, whose hoary head proclaimed him monarch of the woods. Centuries had passed over his head and thinned his topmost branches ; the storms of winter had torn great flakes from his bark, yet he stood proudly, as if bidding defiance to time.

A Virginia creeper had wound its way up the enormous trunk of the oak, and in process of time had nearly covered it, hanging from the lower limbs in graceful festoons. Some fish-hawks had built their nests in the topmost branches, and there they abode year after year ; there they had lived undisturbed since the memory of man. It was from their lofty abode that Mr. Morton's estate had derived its name.

It was proposed by Mrs. Morton that the young people should take their guests to the great oak, as it was but a few hundred yards from the house. Louise offered to lead the way, Commander Conrad placing himself on her right and George May on her left, the latter determined not to be driven off the field without a struggle.

"Next your heart !" whispered George as they started.

"*Toujours !*" replied Louise, gayly, and the despondency of the day before disappeared from the young man's brow as if by magic.

Everybody began wondering what had come over Louise to make her so amiable.

Commander Conrad felt that he had monopolized Louise's society the day before to an extent that good taste would hardly justify. He had been so struck with the beauty of Louise, that he had been completely carried away, and, without stopping to think whether he was trenching on another man's preserves, had devoted himself the whole evening to her.

But his companion had seemed as eager as himself to join in the flirtation, and had spared no effort to be agreeable. When he once remarked, "I hope, Miss Morton, that I am not keeping you away from your more agreeable friends," she laughed, and said :

"There is no one there in whom I am interested, and this *tête-à-tête* is like reaching an oasis in the desert and resting under the trees after crossing a parched wilderness. Our young men," she continued, "are so circumscribed in their every-day limits that their conversation is nothing but gossip. I am saturated with

accounts of Mrs. Jones's diamonds, and Mrs. Smith's little *contre-temps* with Mr. Brown, and trash of that description."

The commander, though a man of the world, and engaged in many a flirtation, was more impressed on his first evening at Hawks' Roost than he had ever been before. That night he sat at his window and smoked until the old clock on the stairs, which Mrs. Morton firmly believed came over in the Mayflower, struck the hour of ten in tones loud enough to scare a dozen burglars out of the house.

"What nonsense!" said Conrad, as he made preparations for retiring. "I shall be here but a few days. Salt water will wash it all out; let me enjoy myself while I may."

With the usual vanity of his sex, Conrad thought he had made a deep impression on this young girl, so entirely unsophisticated, not knowing that Louise was a graduate of Madame Faucet's celebrated finishing-school, warranted to eradicate all innocence and purity from its accomplished pupils.

This being Commander Conrad's state of mind, he was a little surprised at Louise's coquetry with George May, who was suddenly raised to the seventh heaven, while the self-love of the nautical gentleman was considerably diminished. He found he was about to engage a battery carrying heavier guns than he had supposed. "How could she," said he to himself, "tell me that my conversation was like an oasis in the desert after talking to city men, and then turn around and shower all her attentions on this young sprat, who looks too much like a girl to be a man?" So the commander, feeling rather foolish, dropped behind and joined Miss Flossy.

"Louise," said George May, after they were a little in advance, "you are yourself to-day. Last night you made me perfectly miserable. I never closed my eyes all night."

"I?" said Louise. "Why, for mercy's sake, what did I do?"

"Didn't you," said George, "ignore every one in the house, myself in particular, and devote yourself exclusively to Commander Conrad, whom you never saw before?"

"Well, George," she replied, "if you are not the most innocent young man I ever met with! As if a young lady could do anything else but show attention to her brother's friends!"

"Ah!" said George, "but you selected this particular one to receive all your attentions. Deville and myself were left out in the cold."

"Let Deville speak for himself, George," interposed Louise.

"I don't believe he thought anything about it. Nobody thinks anything of a flirtation with naval officers. They have a sweetheart in every port—at least so I am told. Besides, to tell you a secret, Commander Conrad is a prig, and I was glad to run away with you and hear something original."

"Why, Louise," said May, "I thought Commander Conrad a very agreeable person. This morning before breakfast he quite won our hearts by his witty conversation and general intelligence. Then he is a handsome man besides. If he were only a prig I shouldn't mind him."

"If he is all you say," said Louise, "I must begin to observe him a little closer. He is rather good-looking, I admit; but then there are other handsome men here, if that's all that's required."

"Yes, Deville, for instance—the handsomest man I ever saw, and who has qualities of heart that no other man of my acquaintance possesses."

"Really, George, you ought to marry Deville, and be done with it."

They had now arrived at the giant oak, somewhat in advance of the rest of the party. A path led from the oak into the depths of the wood. "Let us walk on, Louise," said George. "I have something to say to you." And they strolled on.

When they had shut out the sight of the others, May turned toward Louise, and said, "You asked me just now why I didn't marry Deville. The reason is, I live in the hope of marrying you, for on that event all my hopes of happiness depend."

"You foolish boy!" laughed Louise. "What nonsense you talk! Why, I am old enough to be your mother."

"You were eighteen eleven months ago, and I am twenty-four."

"But I love you dearly as a brother, and that's the sweetest feeling in the world."

"I don't want to be loved as a brother, Louise," said George. "I want you for my wife—to devote all my life and soul to you, and to die for you if necessary."

"That would be stupid, George. I don't want anything of the kind. I want you and Deville to devote yourselves to me all my life."

"But, Louise, you know that you have given me hopes that after you have had your fling you would be my wife. You have always said you loved me as a brother."

"Oh, dear George!" she said, "that leads to no goal that ever

I heard of. Once a brother, always a brother. If a girl commences that way with a man, she will never marry him. Now, come, dear George, don't mar your happiness by thinking of such a thing. Let your attentions rest on pretty Miss Carrolton. I thought her like a milk-maid at first, but now I see a great deal in her."

"Let her speak for herself," said May. "I want none of her. Louise, you will drive me to despair!"

"What am I to do, between you and Deville? He tells me he loves the very ground I tread upon, yet he says you are the one most worthy of my love. You say you love me to distraction, yet Deville is the noblest man alive."

"So he is, and he is the only one I would be willing to see obtain your hand."

"I suppose, sir," said Louise, rather haughtily, "when it comes to the point you will toss up a copper for the honor of my hand. No, thank you! The man who marries me must be unwilling to yield me to any one else under any circumstances. That's not the love-making I want, George; you have spoken too soon."

"It was time to speak decidedly when I saw you apparently so taken with a stranger. What was I to think?"

"Think what you please," she answered, "but don't insinuate that I know so little of the world, and am so unmaidenly, that I was infatuated with the first good-looking man that came to the house. Now, George, I think we have had enough of this. You must not repeat it, or I shall get angry."

"Is it a crime to love you and to tell you so?" said George. "Ah! Louise, don't turn away angry. Remember, you are pronouncing the verdict that is to make me the happiest or else the most miserable of men. I could not live and see you the bride of another."

"Not even of Deville?" retorted Louise, with a sneer. "After you had tossed up a copper for the possession of my hand, would you not comply with your agreement? But come, George, let us end this, for I have no more idea of marrying you than I have of flying. I shall not marry until I have trampled at least a dozen men under my feet, for that is a woman's privilege."

"You might trample me to death," said George, "and I should be a willing sacrifice. But tell me, I pray you, is there any one who stands in my way? There must be some reason why you can not return my devotion."

She looked at him with eyes of steel. "You ask me if any one

stands in *your* way. I tell you, yes, there is, and in my way too, and may God grant—" She stopped suddenly, and, turning, ran to the old oak, where the party seemed to be enjoying themselves to the top of their bent. A flight of steps led to a platform in the fork of the oak, whereon were seated Miss Carrolton, crowned with flowers as queen of the forest, with Commander Conrad at her side as the king.

This spectacle didn't add to Louise's good humor. She gazed at the pair in rather a cynical manner, and then walked toward the house. George May stood where Louise had left him, almost petrified with astonishment. He saw at last that there was no hope for him. Louise had treated him as if he were a mere boy, yet he had been fool enough to think she might in time consent to marry him. But to-day he saw Louise as he had never before beheld her. As she spoke those enigmatical words and turned on him her fathomless eyes, and then fled away, he saw that she was gone from him forever. He threw himself upon the mossy ground with all the abandon of youthful passion. How could he live without this woman? Better die at once and end his misery.

Yet what was this that stood in his way, and in her way too? What could she mean?

Ah! he had it now. She had deceived him, and had given her heart to Conrad. Poor Deville! his turn would come next, and half his own pain disappeared in the pity he felt for his friend.

With these thoughts and feelings May passed through the woods to the high-road, and thence pursued his way to the "Lamb" tavern, where he gave himself up to gloomy thoughts in the retirement of his room.

Every one at the oak had noticed Louise come out of the woods and then depart toward the house. Those who knew her moods thought nothing of it, but all wondered what had become of George May.

"How could she," said Flossy to Mrs. Eton, "have the heart to refuse him? I feel so sorry for Mr. May. You told me he was sure of her."

"No one can be sure of Louise Morton," said Mrs. Eton, "any more than one can be sure of drawing a prize in a lottery, or being struck by lightning. But, Flossy, we must secure Mr. May for our set; he is lovely at a breakfast-table, and for selecting shades of silk or worsted he hasn't an equal."

"Yes," said Flossy, "Miss Morton will regret her conduct."

"She's after Captain Conrad now," said Mrs. Eton; "this is only preparatory to hooking *him*."

Patch, of course, had noticed the whole affair, for there was nothing that could escape her; and, as soon as she reached home, with her dress in a rather dilapidated condition from climbing about the oak-tree, she repaired forthwith to Louise's room, and found her sister gazing blankly out of the window.

"What *have* you been doing to George May, Louise?" said she.

"Rejecting him, miss, if you must know; and now I advise you to change your dress and try and look respectable."

"Reject George May!" exclaimed Patch, "after you have been coddling him for the past six months, and making believe you only lived in the light of his eyes. How could you reject him after papa and mamma have expressed themselves so pleased with the match?"

"Don't talk nonsense, Patch," said her sister. "I'm not in the humor for it. Would you marry a man that you didn't love?"

"Not by a jugfull," said Patch, with emphasis.

"And if you should happen to love another?"

"The wind sits in that quarter, does it? And how long, pray, have you been affected, Louise, and what remedies have you tried? A bottle of whisky will generally cure a man, unless the attack is very serious. But, Louise, have you no regret at bowling a man over so unceremoniously?"

"Why," replied Louise, "that's all men are fit for. What can you do with the best of them but reject them? You can not marry them all, that's certain. And while one man holds on and fights shy to see how the others fare, you may have to reject a dozen before you get the right one."

"That's it," said Patch. "Throw away a dozen straight sticks and take up with a crooked one at last."

"The whole business," said Louise, "is nothing but a lottery, where a prize is hardly ever drawn. But don't talk to me any more of George May; I don't intend to have him and Deville dangling after me any more; it hurts a girl to have too many lovers at one time."

"Does it?" said Patch. "Well, I'd like to try the experiment when I get to be nineteen, with my eye-teeth out. So you intend to shuffle off Mr. Deville, just as you did poor George May?"

"Exactly."

"You don't take into account," said Patch, "how those two

fellows will make night hideous at the 'Lamb' with their groans and sighs, and in comparing notes with each other."

"I don't intend to take anything into account," said Louise. "They may groan themselves sick if they choose."

"And you'll trample on their hearts, will you?"

"That will I," said Louise. "What would one of the creatures care if he trampled on a woman's heart? Many of them do it after marriage—often the very ones that are most obsequious beforehand. No, I believe it's the mission of some women to pay back to men the wrongs they have inflicted on our sex. So, no more of May and Deville, if you love me."

"You have another lover?" said Patch. "You've found your fate at last—the man for whom you have been looking to paddle down the stream of life with, *et cetera, et cetera*? How about Edgar?"

"Don't mention that name, Patch; it's the bane of my life. I can not sleep without seeing those large dark eyes looking reproachfully at me. I was so mean as to tell mamma not to invite him to dinner yesterday. Well, if the worst comes to the worst, I'll bowl him down with the rest. Why should I consider Edgar Lane? Talk of childhood's affection—what nonsense! Better talk of childhood's deception, and how boys of sixteen begin to deceive and involve one in difficulty. Of all things in the world, save a girl from boy lovers—lock her up in a convent, send her to the Antipodes—anything to get rid of a boy lover, who has no honor, no shame, no responsibility."

"What in the name of heaven are you talking about?" interposed Patch. "Your mumbling reminds me of the witches in Macbeth—

"'Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble.'"

"What I mean to say, Patch," resumed Louise, "is simply this: I have met my fate—he has come. My hands are tied, and I intend to trample under foot every obstacle in my way; and if these men whom you have mentioned see fit to throw themselves beneath the car of Juggernaut, they will be crushed, that's all."

"Amen!" said Patch, "and may you be a good little girl and teach a Sunday-school." And Patch departed in search of her little charge, *Bene Trovato*, whom she found at Deville's side, gazing earnestly in that gentleman's face.

That evening there was to be a dance at the villa. Some of the neighbors had been invited, musicians were engaged, and all neces-

sary preparations made by the housekeeper for a grand supper as part of the entertainment. The ladies were all busy in preparing their dresses, and the gentlemen were left to themselves to get through the remaining hours of daylight as best suited them.

Patch, as usual, had to borrow one of Louise's white muslin dresses, with which she declared she would "make Mr. Berry Sharp, *alias* 'Poodle,' look white under the gills before the evening was over." And she looked so pretty after she was "all ataunto," as her nautical admirer expressed it, as "to set all the men's heads whirling."

Dinner took place an hour earlier than usual that day. Louise was handed in by Commander Conrad. May and Deville were both there; but neither interfered with the commander, who had Miss Morton all to himself, and, judging from appearances, the two were mutually pleased with each other.

Before dinner, thoughtful Harry had remarked to his mother, "Darling mamma, have you forgotten that the venerable Miss Samson and her handbox will arrive to-day? Do you think it would be overstretching politeness for me to take the carriage and escort the amiable spinster up from the steamboat-landing, instead of having her come in the wagon with the trunks? As she is to be a companion to your daughters, I think it would be well to show her this much consideration."

"Take the best carriage, my dear Harry, with the footman," replied Mrs. Morton. "It is always well to impress dependents with a sense of their inferiority; they will respect you the more. If this person shouldn't happen to suit, and should return home very shortly, she will feel better satisfied at having been treated with consideration. Politeness is cheap, and I would save people in the lower walks of life as much humiliation as possible. Persons of this class are very troublesome; they generally haven't sense enough outside their professional accomplishments to keep their heads out of the fire. Yet one can not do without them with a girl of Angeline's age, and Louise requiring some one to perfect her in French, of which really, in spite of Mme. Boulanger, she knows absolutely nothing. But, Harry, won't the girls laugh when they see you riding up with the old maid?"

"But, mother, suppose she happens to be a buxom beauty instead of an old maid?"

"So much the worse," said Mrs. Morton; "buxom and vulgar go together. But order the carriage, for you won't have more than time to reach the boat." So Harry departed on his mission.

The Rip Van Winkle was just coming to the wharf as Harry drove up. He alighted, and went toward the boat to see if he could see the spinster whom he was to escort to Hawks' Roost.

The plank was put out, and a young lady with veil down tripped ashore, while a small trunk, marked Mary Samson, and a small hand-bag without name, were passed on shore. The lady who landed was the only one present, and, as the plank was being hauled in, he looked in vain for the expected spinster. There was her trunk—where was she? No doubt the old lady had fallen asleep and been carried by. But who was the young lady stranger, who had walked to the passenger-house and sat down on one of the chairs at the door? That beautiful figure could not be the old maid he was looking for, and that neat-fitting dress, elegantly made, was certainly the dress of a perfect lady.

As he approached there seemed something familiar in the proud little head, set so beautifully on her shoulders. His heart gave one jump, and it seemed almost as if it had left his body to meet the person of all others on earth he wished to see.

When he was within five feet of her she raised her thick veil, and he stood petrified with joy. He showed it in the most unmistakable manner.

"Miss Gale!" he exclaimed, "this is an unexpected pleasure."

"Let me correct you, sir," she said. "When I had the pleasure of thanking you on our last meeting for the assistance you rendered me, you addressed me as Miss Gale, without my giving you any warrant for doing so. Supposing that we should not meet again, I did not think it necessary to undeceive you when you called me Miss Gale; for, if you will consider a moment, you were scarcely authorized to address me by any name unless I had told you what my name is. My name is not Gale."

"Excuse me," he replied, the blood mounting to his face, "but I am in search of a person whom I am to take to Hawks' Roost—a Miss Samson, who has no doubt been carried by. I beg you a thousand pardons for my intrusion and apparent rudeness, and take my leave."

"I am Miss Samson," she quietly answered, "and I was waiting until I could get the wharfman to attend to me."

"You!" exclaimed Harry, his face suffused with delight. "Then I am to have the honor of escorting you to Hawks' Roost. My name is Harry Morton, the son of the house."

She bowed merely, not intending that the young gentleman

should make her talk more than was necessary. She beckoned to the wharfman, and, when he came, she said, "Send these things to Hawks' Roost. Now, sir," addressing Harry, "I am at your service."

He had been so bewildered with joy at finding Miss Samson in the person of this beautiful girl that he was almost tongue-tied, and he handed her into the carriage without any remark, only insisting that the small trunk and hand-bag should be put up with the coachman. Then he got in by her side, and the carriage drove off.

"Mr. Morton," she said, as soon as they started, "I committed a great indiscretion when I last saw you. I should have told you my name, and who I was, and I fear that this will lead to some complications, especially as you may have mentioned the accident that happened to me, and the name you thought proper to assume for me."

"I regret to say I did mention the matter, and the name I supposed was yours."

"In that case, Mr. Morton, can I depend upon your honor never to mention that you have met Miss Samson before? It might have the appearance of my traveling under two names, and I don't want to be obliged to make explanations on my first entrance into a family, if they retain me."

"Retain you!" said Harry; "why, they will never part with you."

"Perhaps," she said; "but can I depend upon your honor never to refer to the past in any way, and to know me simply as Miss Samson?"

"With all my heart," said Harry, who was delighted to have a secret with this beautiful creature. "There was some discussion," said he, "with regard to your name, which may make it desirable to have nothing said about it. I shall never refer to the matter in any way, and shall forget that I was so indiscreet as to address you by any name until I had your permission to do so."

"Thank you, sir," said Mary, and fell back into the carriage, where she relapsed into silence. Several times he drew her attention to some attractive point or object, and asked her if she did not think it pretty. She only answered, "Yes, very pretty."

When they arrived at the villa-door, the young lady was handed out, and shown into the reception-room by a servant in livery. The surroundings told her that this was the abode of wealth, refinement, and luxury.

"I will inform my mother that Miss Samson is here, if you will permit," said Harry. She bowed her head, and he departed on his errand.

Under the calm exterior of this young girl no one could imagine what conflicting emotions reigned within her bosom. Had she for one moment supposed that she was to meet the young gentleman who knew her as Miss Gale, she would have turned back home to her mother. She did not remember the young man's name after it was spoken by Dr. Preston, and what was her surprise when she saw the same person approach her as if in search of some one, whom she imagined to be herself.

In one instant her clear mind grasped the situation, and she saw there was but one thing to be done—to avoid having the name of Gale run the risk of being mentioned, for reasons given by Mr. Lindsay. The only way of bringing this about was to place young Morton on his honor, for Mary felt confident, from his appearance and his profession, that he would never refer to it again.

But what must he think of her asking him not to mention the name of Gale again? Though she did not know that the name had any significance, and Harry could not help connecting the name of Gale with that galvanic shock, which went through his father and mother, and even through Mr. Vere Saye, at the mention of it. This young person looked too pure and good to have any concealment or reason for one. It was all, without doubt, his own blunder, he thought, and, at all events, it was none of his business.

With these thoughts in his mind, he went to seek his mother. He determined simply to announce Miss Samson's arrival, and let his mother take her own measures to provide for her.

When he entered the room, the family had finished the first course. "Mother," he said, "the lady you expected has arrived."

"And what did you think of the spinster, Harry?" asked Patch.

"I have seen worse-looking people in my life," replied Harry, while he wondered in his mind what his family would think of the beautiful creature, when she should burst upon them in all her loveliness.

"What did she talk about coming up?" asked Patch.

"She didn't talk," replied Harry. "I addressed one or two remarks to her, but she seems to be deaf; and she wears green goggles."

"Horrid!" they all cried, in chorus.

"Is she tall or short?" queried Patch.

"Both," said Harry; "very tall when she sits down, but very short when she stands up."

"What's the color of her hair?" asked Mr. Berry Sharp; "that's what the passengers bet on in the packets when a pilot comes on board."

"I can't say as she has any of her own," replied Harry. "I saw two or three stray bights hanging down over her forehead, and it looked decidedly red."

"What about her teeth?" asked Patch; "has she any?"

"A full new set from the dentist's," said Harry; "two of them plugged, on-purpose to make people believe they are genuine."

"She must be a beauty!" laughed Patch.

"She is," said Harry, "and no mistake. She'll take the rag off any bush here. I'll take another piece of roast-beef. I'm awful hungry after the ride, and in the meanwhile the poor girl probably hasn't had anything to eat since breakfast-time. In fact, I think I heard her say to herself that she would return in the down boat."

"Thank heaven for that!" responded Patch.

"I will go and attend to this person myself," said Mrs. Morton, "if you will all excuse me. Go on and enjoy yourselves. Don't mind me. I have dined."

"Make up your mind to a great disappointment, *ma mère*," said Harry, "and tell me your private opinions."

"I shall never, I fear, be suited. I have been looking for a competent person for a year, and never found one yet," said Mrs. Morton, and she went out with a resigned air.

When Mrs. Morton entered the reception-room it was a little obscure, after coming from the parlor. Mary was standing over a center-table, looking at some prints, and straightened herself up when she heard the door open.

To describe Mrs. Morton's astonishment, at the beautiful vision that burst upon her sight, would be impossible. She had put on something of the dignity she often assumed when going to meet a disagreeable person, but now she stood still and stared with fixed eyes, as if she had seen a ghost.

The color left her face, and she trembled like one with a chill. She seemed apparently unable to move, and the young lady stood silently looking at her. Both seemed mutually surprised. At last Mary moved toward the lady of the house, as she supposed she was

in duty bound to do, and said, in a gentle voice, "I am Mary Samson, the young person you expected."

"You," she said, "Mary Samson?" and, seizing her by the hand, continued, "I expected quite a different person. Ah! has the dead come to life again, or is this the soul of the lost one returned beautified and glorified from the realms of bliss?" She paused, and gazed on the girl inquiringly.

"I hope, madam," said Mary, "I do not revive any disagreeable recollections of any one. Had I not better wait until you are better able to see me?"

"Disagreeable recollections!" murmured Mrs. Morton, absently. "No, child, no. On the contrary, you revive recollections of many years ago, when I loved one not so fair as you, but she had your eyes and hair, while the general likeness is very striking. But it is only a dream I have been indulging in. She has long since moldered to the dust; and, oh! the horrid death she died—burnt up in her own house with her child!"

"My dear madam," said Mary, "I would save you from pain by causing these reminiscences. Had I not better go away as I came? I shall always be before your eyes, causing you discomfort, and I shall consider it no inconvenience to be obliged to return by the evening boat."

"No, child," replied Mrs. Morton, holding her hand, "your presence is a joy to me, for it has been years since I have had anything to remind me of her. But, Miss Samson, you are very young to perform the duties you have assumed."

"Competency, madam, was the object you aimed to procure rather than years, and I am pronounced competent by all my masters."

"Have you a mother living, Miss Samson?"

"Yes, madam," replied Mary, "and she has been my principal instructress in all things. She is a teacher herself."

"But you are famishing."

"No, madam, I dined at four o'clock on board the steamer."

"But you are tired with your long day's journey, and must take some rest."

"I am neither tired nor hungry, Mrs. Morton," said Mary; "I am very strong."

"Then, child, tell me something of yourself; I long to know more of you."

"I have nothing to tell, madam, that would interest you," re-

plied Mary. "Perhaps I could amuse you by showing you my drawings," and she opened her hand-bag and took out the picture of "Expectation" and laid it on the table.

"Did you paint that?" asked Mrs. Morton, surprised. "If you did, the execution far excels anything of the kind I ever saw before, from the hand of any one not a professional."

"That is my picture of 'Expectation,'" said Mary. "It represents a ship just returned from a long voyage, and, taking a pilot, soon hopes to be in port. I intend to paint a companion-picture to it, to be called 'Disappointment.' That will represent the vessel enveloped in a fog and wrecked on the coast of New Jersey. It is a type of life, full of hopes and disappointments."

"What wonderful talents you have!" said Mrs. Morton. "Would you mind playing for me on the piano?"

"Not at all, madam," said Mary. "I shall take pleasure in doing so." She threw back the lid of the piano and played off, without notes, the principal parts of a difficult opera.

All but Mrs. Morton were still at dinner when the music struck their ears. "Mamma's taking the old lady through her paces," Patch said. "She is going to know what she can do on the piano."

"She ought to do well," remarked Harry; "she has fingers as long as the main-top bow-line, and with as much beam in her hand as a cat-boat, and if she can't cover the keys no one can."

"Horrid!" exclaimed Louise. "Why does mamma waste time on her? Why doesn't she give her her *cong  *? I shall not take lessons from her."

But, hush! What delicious sounds! The dining-room door leading to the great hall is open, and rich and melodious airs, played by a master-hand, are floating through the rooms, and filling every niche and corner with a distinctness indescribable. There seemed to be a dozen musicians playing on the piano, and the piece ended with a grand chorus in which almost every musical instrument seemed to be represented.

"If that is not music," said Commander Conrad, "I never heard music. I have heard the best operas played at the San Carlo, at Naples, and I never heard anything finer than that."

There was a perfect silence throughout the room. Not a word was spoken, as if they were expecting more; but that was all.

"Pity she is not nice," said Louise. "I like her touch. Mamma seems interested."

Harry's eyes were full of mischief, and Patch noticed him al-

most suffocating himself trying to restrain his merriment. She looked at him keenly, and then, seizing *Bene Trovato* by the hand, dragged him from the room.

Patch approached the reception-room cautiously, and peeped in, when she saw a person sitting with her back to the door talking to her mother. She crept in, until her mother happened to see her.

"Come here, Angeline," said Mrs. Morton, "and let me introduce you to Miss Samson. My youngest daughter, Miss Samson." As Mary turned and revealed her face, Patch was transfixed to the floor. Her eyes dilated, and one foot was advanced as if she had been surprised when about making a spring.

"What does this mean, mamma?" she exclaimed. "Who is this lovely girl?" The little boy here ran forward, smiling, and, catching Mary by the hands, looked up into her eyes with his most pleased expression.

"Tell me," said Patch, kneeling down by the side of Mary, "was that you playing, or was it the angels? Mamma," turning to her mother, "I'll tell you who this is: it is Louise mellowed down into all that is beautiful and refined."

"You should not pay such compliments, Miss Angeline," said Mary; "it does not suit me, and I am not used to them. You will soon spoil me, and it is not worth while spoiling a girl whose mother has been doing everything all her life to make her a good, common-sense person."

Mrs. Morton sat looking at Mary, while the tears welled up in her own eyes. The girl brought back remembrances of her own early youth, which she could not keep back if she would. She had seen that face somewhere before—perhaps in her dreams—and she felt as if she could take the stranger to her heart and keep her there forever.

Patch was absolutely fascinated with Mary, and sat by her side clasping her hand; while *Bene Trovato*, who had mounted on her lap, was kissing the beautiful ringlets hanging down from behind her ears.

Mary looked perfectly happy. How differently the day had ended from what she expected? Instead of a dependent, she found herself received in the most affectionate terms. A perfect lady was at the head of this establishment, and Mary felt sure that she should be a companion to her pupils, not only in name, but in reality.

Patch took no end of delight in looking over the sketches. She

was charmed with the picture "Expectation." There was one little sketch in sepia that was admirable. It was the picture of a little boy, about four years old, who had run away from his mother and had gone to a small mountain rivulet to bathe. He had taken all his clothes off but his shoes and stockings, and the picture represented him in this predicament, which he knew not how to overcome, while his mother stood laughing and watching him from behind a tree at the head of the rivulet. It was a beautiful sketch, and of great force of character.

There was another sketch of a Newfoundland dog standing over a lambkin, with the mother on the point of flying from a fierce wolf that faced the dog and seemed on the point of attacking him. There was a great deal of character in this picture—the dog representing an animal of the noblest kind, while the wolf represented, in appearance, a mean, shrinking scoundrel. The motto underneath the picture was, "The noble always protect the weak."

"Are these pictures original with you, my dear?" asked Mrs. Morton.

"Yes, madam," replied Mary, "altogether. And I have many more in my trunk."

"Make up your mind," said Patch, "that I shall love you better than anything in the world. We shall be chummies, and I'll let you have *Bene Trovato* as much as you like." And she put her arms impulsively around Mary's neck and kissed her.

"Now," said Mrs. Morton, "take Miss Samson to her room and let her refresh herself. The blue room, Angeline, next to yours; and remember, dear, not to annoy Miss Samson with too much of your attention." So off they went, Patch holding one hand, and *Bene Trovato* the other.

When Mrs. Morton returned to the dining-room, Harry said, "Well, mother, what do you think of the spinster?"

"How could you, Harry, libel such a creature by calling her a spinster? She is the most lovely being I ever laid my eyes on, and so full of talent! Her music you have heard; her water-colors are perfect."

"Most lovely, mamma, did you say?" interposed Louise. "Is not that rather a superlative expression to apply to a music-teacher? I can associate nothing lovely with that class of people. I hope she will remember that she comes here to teach, and that if she is asked to play she will feel it a duty as well as a pleasure."

"Whatever she may think," said Mrs. Morton, "I shall see

that she shall do nothing that is not compatible with the position of a perfect lady, which she is. She has so stirred my heart this night, by bringing back to my memory some associations of early youth, that I am rather unnerved, and not fit company for you young people until I take some repose. You will see Miss Samson, gentlemen, this evening at the party, for I intend that she shall take her position in our family the moment she enters it."

Louise knew what her mother meant when she issued her edicts, but that did not prevent her from making up her mind to hate Mary Samson with a holy hatred, and to annoy her in every conceivable way.

When Mrs. Morton left the room, the gentlemen gathered around Harry, and all commenced inquiring about the new comer. "What is she like?" asked Vere Saye.

"Like all that you ever imagined beautiful and lovable," replied Harry; "and she seems to possess all the virtues, for my mother is not one to take up lightly with any stranger. You may depend upon it that she has carefully examined into this lady's qualifications, and that they are of the first order. Who she is or what she is I do not know, but she is apparently the most thoroughbred, beautiful woman I ever met, and she can not yet be twenty years of age."

When Harry commenced eulogizing the stranger, Louise rose impatiently. "If we are to be entertained with the virtues of our dependents," she said, "I prefer the Hawks' Throne; and if Commander Conrad is ready for a walk, I shall be happy if he will accompany me."

She might have had three or four attendants, but her preference had been so plainly shown, that no one cared to intrude. Deville and George May had not approached her for nearly two days. They seemed to have made common cause against her.

There was a pair of large, dark, hungry-looking eyes that followed her unseen night and day, either from his window, where he could see what was going on, or from the thick covert of the woods, where he could see who came into the woods. This was Edgar Lane, the poor dependent secretary, who had not been seen much of late about the premises.

After the arrival of the naval officers, Edgar Lane could not get a hearing. If he were going to the city, and called to ascertain Louise's orders, she had none to give. Formerly she not only had commissions to execute, but would accompany Edgar Lane down

to the landing, and stop and wave her handkerchief as the boat moved off ; but now there was a great change.

The unhappy young man wandered listlessly about the grounds, apparently without any object in life. These last three or four days had been an eternity to him. He had been an obedient slave and worshiper for over two years, and now there was a barrier between him and Louise which he was forbidden to pass. He had already passed that barrier in daring to lift his eyes to his patron's daughter—a patron who, if he dreamed of such a thing, would have trampled on him as if he were a common flower of the field.

Even if his patron knew that the canker-worm of love was eating away his heart, he would expect him to sit and work, day after day, with hunger gnawing at his vitals—the hunger of love—and with the rich, tempting fruit hanging within reach, and he not daring to put his hand out and grasp it. Not even so much ; he must not venture to look at it. A cat might look at a king, but he must no more raise his eyes in adoration to Louise Morton than attempt to fly.

So thought Mr. Morton, who allowed the most unrestricted freedom between his secretary and his daughter, because he thought her so far above him that he would never dare raise his eyes to that altitude.

Even should he see anything of the kind going on, he would interpose no obstacle until the time came for the delinquent to be called to task. Then Mr. Morton would send for him, and, with all the most exquisite refinement of cruelty, he would proceed to “trample him out”—to use his own favorite expression. He was like some of the old tyrannical kings, who spared not even a relative to the fifth degree. He would leave no stone unturned in carrying out his trampling process, to punish any dependent that looked up to the height of one of the house of Morton.

He had friends in other banks. A single innuendo would be enough to deprive a young man of his character in a bank, without laying one's self open to the charge of libel. “You have, I see, discharged your chief clerk,” says Mr. Jones to Mr. Perkins ; “a great loss to you, that.” “Yes, so it is,” says Perkins ; “but it might prove a greater loss if I kept him,” and, putting his finger to the side of his nose, walks off. Who can say that Mr. Perkins has maligned his secretary ? But, nevertheless, he can obtain no employment. Every one who is intimate with the secretary gives him the cold shoulder, and in a short time he is found strung up in a

closet. Perkins was not to blame. He had nothing to do with it. Oh, no! not he! He only spoke his vile words of slander, which prevented all employment for a poor secretary, who had not enough money to bury himself with.

Mr. Morton would do worse than this when the time came to put his vengeance into execution, if ever he had occasion to do so. He had always stored away some surprise for those who served him badly. He would put temptation in the way of an employee, and if he should fall by having too much money placed at his disposal, Mr. Morton would not mete out immediate punishment to him. He would keep him for his own purposes until the time came either to use him or "trample him out."

The last two years of Edgar Lane's life had been years of fear and misery. In spite of all edicts, he had dared to raise his eyes to his patron's daughter; and she, with the thoughtlessness of a young girl, had listened to the love-talk of a youth but six years older than herself—she fourteen and he twenty.

It amused her to have a clandestine affair with a forbidden object. The fact that it was a forbidden object only added zest to it. She was as much in love with him the week after he opened his heart to her as she ever was. Hers was not a love that grew. It was like a vine constantly cut down, that would throw out its feelers and cling to the first object it met, without knowing or caring whether it was worthy or not. She would cling only so long as it suited her to do so. If a projecting wall or a trellis offered itself, this vagrant vine would shoot off in search of other adventures.

Louise had seen the poor, hollow-cheeked fellow within the last three days—since she had devoted herself to Commander Conrad—wandering listlessly about the grounds, trying to obtain speech of her, but she did not even look at him. It had been revealed to her, as she expressed herself to Patch, that she had met her fate; and, like most people under such circumstances, she began to hate the one she was about to wrong. She conceived the idea that he had inflicted a great injury upon her by lifting his eyes to her, and worked herself into the thought that he had degraded her by coming into such close communion with her.

He was sitting in the garden, in one of the grottoes, when she came out with Commander Conrad, and led the way to the Hawks' Throne—that old trysting-place which had witnessed the meeting of lovers for over four centuries, and where, no doubt, the Indian war-

rior wooed the Indian maid to his wigwam, with words as loving and language as poetic as that of most modern lovers !

The tears rose to Lane's eyes as he saw them pass on—she leaning confidently on Conrad's arm, and he pouring into her ear that beautiful language of the heart which women so love to hear.

Hours passed, and still Edgar Lane watched for their return ; yet it was not until just before the clock struck nine—after the hour to dress for the ball—that Conrad and Louise returned toward the house, quiet and subdued, as if some great happiness had been poured into their lives.

"And it is only a little over two days," said Lane, "since she first knew this man, while she has known me so long."

He did not go to the party, though Mrs. Morton had invited him. He wandered away down to the river-bank, by the old oak path which led to the landing. He stopped there for a moment. He saw a white handkerchief lying on the ground. "It is hers," he said, and picked it up and placed it next his heart. "There I will wear it," he said, "till I die ! Louise ! Louise !" he exclaimed tearfully, "may you never live to repent what you are doing !"

As Louise reached the villa, she bade her companion a soft *au revoir*, and slipped through the small gate at the back of the house which led to the wing where she lodged. She found George May sitting alone on the porch smoking a cigar. He threw it away on perceiving her, and approached her.

"Dear Louise," he said, "I want one word with you. I am mortified and humiliated to death. You seemed to scorn me to-day as if I were something unworthy of your love. Tell me only that you do not scorn me !"

"No, dear George," said Louise. "Why should I scorn you ? A great deal of my happiness has been linked with you. If you knew, you would not blame me. I shall always love you as a brother ; what more would you ?"

"Tell me one thing," he said—"I do not wish to rest under the impression that I am considered presumptuous in aspiring to your hand ; you spoke so contemptuously to me ; you insinuated that you were not free : would you deem me a worthy suitor if you were free and untrammelled ?"

"O God of mercy !" she exclaimed passionately, "yes ; I would welcome you as an angel of light !" And she pushed by him and rushed up-stairs.

"Thank heaven for that!" said the poor fellow. "She does not despise me! I was too abrupt in my wooing. She is not ready to give up her liberty; it is too much to ask from her. I may win her yet. Ah! and then I shall break my poor Deville's heart. She says she is not free," he continued. "Can it be that she is engaged to Deville? No, no, no! he would never keep a secret from me. Yet they say there is no such thing as honesty in love; and why not? I would be loyal to him until death, and would hand her over to him, if she loved him, if it broke my heart the next moment. But she does not despise me, and that is an atom of happiness just now." Then, musing, he went toward the "Lamb."

When Louise came into her room, she found her mother arranging her dress for the evening. "Louise," said she, "have you any desire to see and become acquainted with the new member of our household? It strikes me it would be well for you to know her before going into the ball-room, that you may be able to introduce her to the guests. She has consented to be present."

"Consented to be present, mamma!" exclaimed Louise in an excited voice. "Has the house of Morton come to that strait that a music-teacher *consents* to present herself where the best people in New York would beg admission? No, mamma, I take no interest in this twanger of instruments and dauber in water-colors, and I think an unnecessary amount of fuss has been made about her."

"But, Louise," said her mother, "this is a lady—a patrician by birth, I am sure."

"Is she, like papa's patricians, covered with gold-leaf?" asked Louise. "If not, what business has she here except in her position as French and German teacher and instructor in drawing and music? Mamma, don't you think the Mortons are getting a little low in their ideas? For my part, as I grow older my ideas grow more exalted."

"Yes," said her mother, "but your ideas are not so exalted as to prevent you from wounding the mother who has watched over you through years of infancy, and did hope to receive some reward when you arrived at the age of reason."

"Yes, mamma; but will you tell me at what age reason comes?"

"It comes," said Mrs. Morton, "with some people when they are old enough to value the affection of parents, and to know how much they are wrapped up in their children's welfare and happi-

ness ; it comes at an age when young people in a family should begin to realize that they are an integral part in the whole, and that it is their duty to give their share of work, to confer what happiness they can on the others, so that they may receive a corresponding return. There are some people, my daughter, who never arrive at that age, and you are one of them."

"Yes, mamma?" said Louise.

"Decidedly yes," said her mother. "But, fortunately, I have never let the happiness of my family depend upon any one member of it. Now, I shall not depend upon you to have my house appear as the house of Morton should. I shall introduce Miss Samson myself." And she went out of the room with a shade upon her brow.

"Yes, mamma," said this cold-blooded daughter, and sat down to sew bows on her slippers, as if nothing had occurred to disturb her tranquillity.

As to Patch, she was bothering her mother to death about Miss Samson. "Only think, mamma, she is going to wear a high-neck, square-front, white muslin, with open-laced sleeves, trimmed with blue ribbons. She says it is all she has. I have persuaded her to wear a rose in her hair, to help out her dress."

"And I have no doubt, my darling," said her mother, "that she will look as pretty as any one at the party. The girl has the most refined taste in everything, and the dress she came here in looked as if it had been made to fit a duchess. My child, you give me much pleasure in the interest you take in this young lady, for I can not tell you how my heart has gone out to her. She has moved recollections of twenty years ago, and brought before me one I loved very dearly. The more I see her the more the likeness grows upon me ; only she is much more beautiful than the one I remember."

"And," said Patch, "did you ever see such a likeness to Louise ? I wouldn't mention it to my sister for the world. I think she would split her own nose to look different."

"Yes, darling," said the mother, "the likeness to Louise is very great ; only she is Louise softened down and chastened—Louise as I would like to have her."

"You dear, sweet mamma, you ought to have everything in the world that you want," said Patch ; and she put her arms around her mother's neck, and kissed her a dozen times.

CHAPTER XXX.

MRS. MORTON'S PARTY.

ALL parties are pretty much alike, except that some are larger than others, the rooms more brilliantly lighted, and there is more music—which the reader, no doubt, will say makes all the difference in the world.

This is a fact, I believe, generally admitted, for without the music the company would likely soon desire to go home.

Then the lighting of a room has a great deal to do with the happiness of the evening. If the light is bad, there is a gloom over the whole company. Light should always be in the ascendency at a party, no matter how small the entertainment may be.

I have heard of a Frenchman who, when asked what the first requisite of a party is, answered, light; what is the second, more light; what is the third, more light. He did not take into consideration at all the creature comforts of an entertainment. He thought that light makes up for all deficiencies—that is, increases the ardor for the intellectual, and makes conversation brisk.

No one is lively in a dark room; and that is why lovers, as a general rule, like to wander beneath the light of the moon and stars when not engaged in dancing. There must be just the right quantity of light to make the complexion of the ladies appear of a peach bloom—which, let me assure the reader, can not be obtained under the ghastly reflection of gas-light, but is only brought out under the rosy-colored light of the wax-candle.

If you want your party to be a great success, abolish gas, and fill every nook and corner with wax-candles, guarding against the falling of wax by an automatic arrangement.

The difference of one party from another is relatively as its square of intelligence is to the lightness of the company's heels—which will be found to pay the host or hostess better than if they had imported all the *savants* of Europe to the entertainment.

However small may be the entertainment, provided there are enough people present to entitle themselves to be called a dancing party, there will be found the same hopes, aspirations, jealousies, envy, malice, and all uncharitableness that one would expect to find in a first-class assembly: only all the above attributes of a first-class place of enjoyment are generally boiled down in a small crowd

to that particular degree of acerbity that gives everything a most piquant flavor. Mrs. Tartar and Mrs. Venom are never so much in their element as at one of these medium-sized parties, where everything can be seen and every word heard.

I am afraid Mrs. Morton's little party is not going to be a success. She is afraid so herself. She already sees a small storm brewing, and, although for the present it remains but a speck upon the horizon, there is no knowing how soon it may spread over the firmament, so easily can one uncertain member of a family produce discord, even when there is every reason why peace should prevail.

There were in this small assembly a good many elements of strife, which, though lying dormant at present, were only slumbering.

If any one could have looked into the hearts of the company, he would have been surprised to see the amount of deep undercurrent, of subtle cunning, envy, malice, and hatred, all hid beneath hearts that to all appearances were the gayest of the gay.

Is it not so in all great and small assemblies? Why, therefore, should Mrs. Morton's party be an exception?

Mrs. Morton went down early to see that everything was in order in the ball-room, an apartment arranged expressly for dancing and for concerts. It was a spacious, well-proportioned room, thirty-two feet wide by fifty feet long, with an arched ceiling, frescoed with a beautiful design, called "The Loves of the Angels," where those beautiful spirits were grouped about in the most pleasurable way, and seemed to be enjoying themselves immensely after their own fashion. The floor was made of the smoothest kind of wood, and well waxed. The windows that surrounded the room were French, cut down to the floor, to enable the evening breezes to circulate throughout the room. Then there was a pretty orchestra-stand, raised a few feet from the floor, fitted with a piano, and occupied by five musicians imported from New York. What more could be desired? Only gay hearts and light heels!

Mrs. Morton threw herself in one of the comfortable easy-chairs placed against the wall, and rested until the time came for the company to assemble. The musicians in the orchestra were playing some air, and Mrs. Morton was dreamily listening to it, when the door opened and Patch, dressed in the best she could muster among her torn white muslins, entered, leading in Mary Samson by one hand, and *Bene Trovato* by the other—the latter having been

allowed, owing to innumerable signs he made, to sit up and witness the ball.

As Mrs. Morton raised her head, this beautiful group presented itself, and at once drove all gloomy thoughts from her mind. What could be more charming? There was Mary, dressed in a simple white muslin, with a trifle of lace trimming on it, and ornamented with blue ribbon, while in her hair was a pale, pink rose, which Patch insisted on putting there. Her dress fitted her to perfection, showing her willowy, graceful figure to advantage. It was cut square in the neck, just sufficient to show the pure white skin of part of her full bust, while her perfectly rounded arms shone like the purest ivory through the lace open sleeves, with which they were covered to the wrists, while her tiny hands were hid from sight in a pair of white kid gloves.

There was Patch, with her angelic face, and with her dress put on in a manner that she calculated would make Mr. Berry Sharpe ask her for at least two dances. And she was sure of two more each from Mr. Deville and George May, and certainly one from Edgar Lane. But it was not certain that Patch would not hitch herself out of her low-necked dress before the evening was over.

There was *Bene Trovato*, with his beautiful black eyes and long, curling hair. What would you have more? What could make a lovelier group, to stand up with Mrs. Morton and receive the company, than this?

Mrs. Morton had no eyes for any one but Mary. Tears stood in her long lashes as she took the girl's hand and said: "You are very lovely, my child—I hope not so much so as to create envy; but stand by me, and I will introduce you as the guests come in. It is right that my daughter's companion should be properly presented as one of the family."

Mary looked her thanks with her dark, expressive eyes, and, taking one of Mrs. Morton's shapely hands in hers, kissed it affectionately.

As to Patch, she beamed all over as the company entered and her new friend was introduced to them. The guests that were introduced to Mary passed on, and paused a moment to look at her, as if she were an angel from the realms of bliss. "Who is she?" they all inquired. "Where did she come from? Of what family of Samsons is she?"

When Mrs. Eton and Flossy came in, and went up to pay their respects to Mrs. Morton, they stood stock still, quite out of breath

with amazement. "What does this mean?" said Flossy; "is this Louise in a new *rôle*?" And then she saw that this was not Louise, but an etherealized representation of her.

"Heavens, what a love of a girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Eton.

They both knew that Mrs. Morton expected a new teacher. Could this be the one? "Who is Miss Samson?" was on every tongue. As to the gentlemen, they were beside themselves with admiration. They could not keep their eyes off of Mary, and were all dying for the opportunity to ask her for a dance.

All the guests had assembled, as near as Mrs. Morton could tell, and she was about to send word to the musicians to commence a quadrille, when she remembered that Louise had not made her appearance.

Louise had determined on this evening to array herself in her most beautiful dress—an embroidered muslin, with elaborate lace trimmings, caught up in loops, and held by bouquets of moss-rose buds in French flowers. A large string of pearls inclosed her beautiful neck, and her toilet was finished off with all those tasteful accessories which a refined woman only knows how to use to advantage. She had waited till all the company had assembled, wishing to appear upon the scene like some bright meteor, and astonish all beholders.

She had not given a thought to the new-comer, Mary Samson. She did not know whether her brother was joking or not about her—whether she was as ugly as Sin, or as beautiful as Hebe. She hated that kind of cattle, as she expressed herself, and, as she traveled over the earth, she never looked at them, or let them interfere with her in any way. She laughed at her mother's fancy in taking this girl by the hand so suddenly, and introducing her at a dancing-party. "Papa will interfere with that arrangement," she said to herself. "He doesn't like *mésalliances*. He will relegate her to the school department or send her home. But pshaw!" she exclaimed; "why am I bothering about a piece of mamma's sentimentality, when I haven't got this patch of court-plaster on my cheek to suit me? There! that will do, it is just enough near the dimple to draw attention to it—a finger-post to woman's vanity!"

"Well, what would the best of beauty be worth, if it were not for the little adornments we put on? I don't believe that beauty when unadorned is adorned the most. Imagine Miss Samson in a black traveling-silk, her only dress—bah! I wonder what the company will think of mamma's taste in the selection of her *protégées*.

She might have been satisfied in introducing into society two rather passable-looking daughters—that is, taking it for granted that Patch will some day have some flesh on her bones, and will get the kinks out of her.”

Then came a tap at the door, and a bouquet from Commander Conrad, with his compliments, and could he have the honor of taking Miss Morton into the ball-room! How her heart jumped! She had hoped this. What a pleasure to enter the ball-room with, to her taste, the handsomest and most *distinguished* man in the house!

She tripped down-stairs. “Oh, thanks,” she said; “this is an unexpected pleasure. In full uniform, and so becoming to you, if anything were wanted.”

He bowed low and offered his arm, and they went in together. All eyes were upon them—this splendid girl and the handsome officer.

“Take me,” she said, “to that sofa near the window at the middle of the room,” and she was about passing the spot where her mother stood with Mary Samson, when, casting her eyes in that direction, she saw a sight that took her breath away—Mary with all her wonderful beauty gazing at her, with a beauty equally as remarkable, and with an intensity any woman would be pleased with.

If a vision of heaven had come upon earth, Louise Morton could not have been more astonished. This was something more beautiful than she had ever dreamt of in her life. She had seen her own reflection in the glass, and it seemed to her that there was nothing more beautiful; and yet here was one in a simple muslin dress, pure white neck without an ornament, and she felt that Mary Samson was the lovelier of the two.

Her first impulse was to tear the string of pearls from her neck and scatter them upon the floor, for she saw that she had made a mistake in endeavoring to adorn a part of her person that without pearls was perfectly beautiful. She hesitated a moment as if she would move on and take no notice of the person before her, but, dropping Commander Conrad’s arm, and with her eye glittering with that steel-like look she could assume when she pleased, she walked up to the girl, who was regarding her with profound admiration.

“Is this,” she asked, “the Miss Samson we all thought to be an old spinster—the lady Harry described with red hair and false teeth, and a hand that would cover a ten-acre lot, and a figure like a shingle? How could Harry associate anything so beautiful with

something so absurd ! Yes," she continued, "you are beautiful, far too beautiful for one in your station ; but, Miss Samson, your beauty will prove a curse to you." And, falling back, she took Commander Conrad's arm, and walked off to the sofa she first desired to reach.

To describe Mrs. Morton's horror at this conduct would be impossible, nor would it be possible to depict Mary's mortification, who could scarcely realize that she was awake, and that all this was not a dream, she had been received with such affection by every one. She could not realize that a daughter of Mrs. Morton could deliberately insult her in the presence of her protector and the lookers-on. Her heart had gone out to Louise, and she was thinking: "This is certainly the most beautiful being I ever beheld ! What joy to be the companion to such a girl !" Her eyes filled with tears at the insult, though she preserved her dignity and self-possession.

"I need not tell you, my dear," said Mrs. Morton, her eyes filled with tears, "the mortification this has given me. But the rest of my family will amply make up to you for this unkind treatment. This is unusual in Louise, and she will make up for it hereafter."

"I am afraid, madam," said Mary, "that dislike such as this will prevent my remaining with you. I don't see how I could possibly have incurred it."

"Miss Samson," replied Mrs. Morton, "Louise has peculiar moods, but I am mistress in this establishment, and while you are under my protection no one shall treat you with disrespect."

"But," said Mary, "I want her to love me as I shall her, and I should feel miserable if I thought she would not like me in the end."

"You must take the world, my dear, as you find it. Many a home has a Louise Morton in it, the harmony of which would never be disturbed but for her. But that is no reason why persons whose fate it is to abide within it should give themselves any trouble to please characters so contradictory, or make themselves the least uncomfortable on their account. I depend a good deal on your example to influence my daughter. She must be won by you in time, and if you can overcome this temper of hers so far as to make her look upon you as her friend, you will place me under obligations that I can never repay."

"I will try my best," replied Mary ; "I can never repay the kindness you have shown to me."

There was one thing that mortified Mary Samson greatly—this

was the idea that Harry Morton had held her up to ridicule, had described her as a red-haired spinster, with false teeth and a hand big enough to cover a ten-acre lot! "Why should he have done that?" she thought. "I considered him so gentlemanly and refined; I felt even under obligations I could never repay for his kindness to me on board the boat."

"Perhaps," she thought, her face blushing deeply as the idea took possession of her mind, "he despises me because he thinks I had assumed a false name, and doesn't care what he says about me!"

Patch had gone up to her and put her arm around her waist, and, looking up at her face with her tearful eyes, she said: "You will think our family snobby after that performance of Louise's, won't you, Miss Samson? but you may believe what I tell you when I say that Louise is the only snob in the family. She is always doing snobby things, and always will. There's a screw loose in that girl's head, and if I don't give her a raking down this night—"

"Oh, don't, for mercy's sake," interrupted Mary, "ever mention the matter to her! Leave it to me and time to win her over and make a friend of her. I must have her love, and will obtain it in time. I have had some pupils very intractable, but I always won them over in the long run."

"The rhinoceros doesn't mate with the dove, nor the bear with the antelope, and the lion and the lamb do not lie down together, unless the lamb is inside the lion," said Patch, looking very wise after delivering herself of this speech; "and I'll see," she said, "that she doesn't behave so again. I know things about her she's afraid I'll tell; she knows with whom to mind her p's and q's."

The gentlemen all came up one after another to ask Miss Samson to dance, but she declined all invitations. At last Mr. Deville asked her if she would walk about and sit out a cotillion, which invitation she accepted, and they finally found a seat and entered into conversation. He found her highly cultivated, much more so than himself, and she expressed herself simply and clearly on all matters connected with painting, music, and poetry—the subjects he had selected for opening the conversation.

The generous-hearted Deville had seen the manner in which she had been treated by Louise Morton, and he felt mortified that a woman to whom he had given his love should play such a part, and hence he determined to show Mary that he appreciated her beauty and talents.

There was something about Mary so winning that he felt drawn toward her at once, not with anything like the feelings of love, but with a brotherly sentiment that made him desire to watch over and protect her.

In half an hour he felt that he had known her a life-time. She carried her character on her face, where any one would soon read the purity that filled her heart.

Devil's impulses were all noble ; he always wanted to protect the weak ; and, without trying to know more of Mary's history than she chose to impart of her own free will, he was deeply anxious to know all about her.

He had given his heart to Louise Morton the first time he saw her, and he felt then that he would never change. He knew her faults, and was often wounded by her sarcasms, but, faithful Newfoundland as he was, he would bear a blow from his mistress and then kiss the hand that gave it.

She might drive a dagger into his body, and he would draw it out and use it in her defense. He loved that grand beauty of hers with an adoration unequaled, and though he had no certainty that she would ever consent to be his wife, yet he would be true to her to the end, no matter what happened.

"Look at James Deville," said Louise to Commander Conrad ; "how devoted he is to this new face, which seems to have so fascinated all you gentlemen ! It seems to me that after drinking champagne it must seem like milk and water to him."

"What do you mean, Miss Morton ?"

"I mean," she answered, her eyes flashing, "that he has been my obedient slave for the last six months, and now he is drinking at this fresh stream of water as if he had never drank before."

"Perhaps," said the commander, "it is because it is fresh that he drinks. Don't you think, Miss Morton, that you were very ungenerous to that poor girl, in speaking to her the way you did ? She is very beautiful, no doubt, but you with your gorgeous beauty can afford to let others possess a small modicum of that most desirable article, without noticing those who worship at another shrine."

"Do you find fault with me, too ?" exclaimed Louise ; "I am already suffering under my mother's displeasure, and no doubt she will send me to bed without my supper ! If Commander Conrad should find me wanting, and should withdraw his countenance, I should be beggared indeed. I should not be surprised to see you worshipping at the shrine yourself."

"No," was the reply, "I desire to worship at no other shrine than this ; but I am quite sure you are too noble and generous to wish to hurt the feelings of a young person, one who is a dependent, and who would not likely stay here if she could not meet with your approbation."

"What an able advocate of this young dependent you are !" she said sarcastically. "Commander Conrad, I wish you to understand that I am not generous ; so, if you have formed any such foolish idea, you had better dismiss it. If you are so much interested in that young person, you had better join Mr. Deville and Mr. Vere Saye, who both seem perfectly fascinated with her."

"Yet," said Conrad, "their fascination seems to me to consist more of a very friendly feeling. To judge from the expressions of their faces, they are amused at her *naïveté*."

Louise's humor was not to be overcome. It actually hurt her, she was so ill-tempered ; but there were certain conventionalities she felt obliged to preserve to keep up the character of a lady, and she did not want to lose the good opinion of the man that had so fascinated her.

She felt that he was one who would not sacrifice his feelings of right or wrong to a woman, even if he were in love with her ; that he was a man with a will of his own, and would assert it ; and that she was running great risk of losing not only his good opinion but his company, in persisting in a course which even to herself appeared contemptible.

"Let us drop the subject," she said ; "we can't agree, and it is not pleasant to me to continue it."

"I have an inherent dislike to injustice," he replied, "come from what quarter it may, and I should be sorry to lose the high opinion I have formed of your character, by thinking you would make a point of persecuting a young lady who seems to meet the approbation of every one, and particularly to enjoy the good opinion of Mrs. Morton."

"Young lady !" laughed Louise scornfully. "How do you know she is a young lady ? Who knows where she came from, or who she is ?"

"There is always a stamp that marks the coin," he responded. "There is a nobility about that girl that no one can mistake. She has beauty, purity of character, and intelligence, marked in every line of her countenance, or I am no judge of human nature. Excuse me, Miss Morton, for being so persistent in wishing you to look

upon this matter differently, but I don't wish to appeal in vain to your sense of justice."

"It strikes me, Commander Conrad," said Louise, with her most steely expression, "that, considering you have only known me three days, you take undue liberties in undertaking to regulate my conduct."

"Perhaps I do," he said; "but you are too beautiful to be anything but just. Nature never intended that so rich a casket should contain anything but a heart full of the noblest impulses."

"You had better go and cast yourself at Miss Samson's feet at once," rejoined Louise; "you may find a casket there full of all the virtues you are in search of"; and here she cast down her eyes, and began to pull her shawl-fringe to pieces in vexation. She never looked more beautiful than she did at this moment, and so thought Conrad. He had not known Louise Morton long enough to understand her fully. He looked upon her as a beautiful spoiled heiress, who would in time, under the contact of a firm will, develop into a glorious woman.

"I have no desire, Miss Morton," he said, "to cast myself at Miss Samson's feet. If I cast myself at any one's feet here, it will not be hers." And he looked at Louise in a manner not to be mistaken.

"You think her very beautiful, do you not?" she inquired.

"I do," he replied; "but I should not feel justified in letting her suppose I thought so—she is a dependent, and entitled to my sympathy and respect, and I should consider that any man would be acting an unmanly part in paying her unnecessary compliments. I don't think she is one who would permit such a thing, no matter how much she would like any one, while she occupied her present position under your mother's roof."

"You seem to have acquired considerable knowledge of her in the short time you have been in this room," said Louise sarcastically.

"Yes, I read human nature at a glance. I have traveled much, and have come in close contact with all kinds of people. I read people as I read a book; there are few so astute that I can not penetrate them."

"Then, pray, Commander Conrad, what has your reading of me led you to think?"

"That you are beautiful, and that implies everything; for I could not think you beautiful if I thought you had faults."

"Yet you have been taking me to task?"

"If you think it taking you to task," said Conrad, "because I take so deep an interest in you that I do not wish you to accuse yourself hereafter of an injustice, so be it, but let me assure you you are the only woman in the world that I take that much interest in."

"And if I agree," said Louise, "to be what you call more generous to this girl, what then?"

"Then I shall think you more beautiful than ever."

"You are the only man I ever knew that I would concede that much to."

"And you are the only woman I would attempt to obtain such a victory from, for it is a victory that assures me your heart is in the right place."

Louise felt better after having given in, though she did it with a poor grace. She saw evidently that she had to do with a man of a most persistent will, who, whatever might be his admiration for her, would not sacrifice a single principle to cater to her prejudices.

He managed her with the same coolness he would manage his ship when in a dangerous position. He never let her get from under his influence; yet, notwithstanding her apparent tractability for fear she should lose a lover, she determined to hate Mary Samson worse than ever.

Whenever Louise cast her eyes around she would find a fresh devotee at the shrine of Mary Samson. Now George May had joined the other two men, while Patch was sitting with her arm through hers and gazing up into her face, the little *Bene Trovato* lying with head in her lap, and holding on to the hand of Deville, whom he still clung to as his friend.

Edgar Lane had determined at first not to be present at the party, but the lights and the music were too potent for him, and he was so miserable that he determined to go in and look upon Louise in all her loveliness, even if he met with nothing but disappointment and black looks.

After paying his respects to Mrs. Morton, she said, "Edgar, come with me and be introduced to Miss Samson."

He, like the others, was amazed at the likeness to Louise. "It is her," he said, "etherealized." He loved Louise Morton with all his soul, but he knew all her faults. She had been his little tyrant for years, and from the time she was thirteen she had led him a willing captive. He looked around the room for her. She was sitting on a sofa, still with Commander Conrad, with her eyes cast

down, and lending a willing ear to his flattering professions. Edgar felt as if a dagger had been driven into his heart.

He had not spoken to her for four days—an age to him ; and now, whenever he saw her, she was with Commander Conrad.

He determined to speak to her that night if it cost him his life. So he walked over to where she sat, and stood before her, pale, hollow-eyed, and heart-stricken.

She started when she saw him, and for a moment her heart smote her, but the cold glitter came into her eyes, and Edgar felt that his fate was sealed. He saw no sympathy there, and his heart sank within him.

“ I am going to New York in the morning, Miss Morton,” he said ; “ have you any commissions for me to execute ? ”

“ None,” she said coldly, and turned to talk to Commander Conrad. Edgar staggered away, scarcely able to control himself, and rushed out into the open air, where he could breathe freely. Wandering away to the old oak, he sat there with his head between his hands until late at night. He saw that she no longer loved him, if she had ever done so. Indeed, she treated him as if she hated him, him to whom she promised eternal fidelity in days never to come again.

“ Who is that interesting-looking young man ? ” said Conrad to Louise. “ He seems agitated, and as if he had lately recovered from a fit of illness.”

“ It is one of my father’s dependents ; a knight of the plume,” was the reply. “ I did not notice his looks.”

But Conrad noticed that he was more than ordinarily agitated, and he pondered over it. But he was becoming hourly more infatuated with the beauty of this strange girl, and he delighted to show the ascendancy he was gaining over her, for it was quite evident she had given up every one else for his society.

George May had become disgusted with all the world. Louise never so much as looked at him and Deville, and he determined to leave, in disregard of all his friends could say to the contrary. So he bade Mrs. Morton good-night, saying that he would leave in the morning.

She saw how the case stood and sighed, but said nothing. She knew that the best remedy for the heart-ache was for him to leave. She felt for him, and that he had been badly treated by her daughter ; but that was a woman’s privilege—*que voulez-vous ?*

The party was a failure as regarded giving any one pleasure—

there were so many disappointments. Toward the end of the evening Flossy and Mrs. Eton, with Harry Morton, joined the group where Mary Samson was sitting, and they made it lively ; but Harry noticed that she never once looked at him, and seemed determined to avoid him. He made several remarks to her, but she simply answered with a monosyllable, and did not notice him further.

"What can it mean?" he asked himself; and that night he, too, went to bed with a sore heart.

The only persons who seemed to pass the evening without any *contretemps* were Miss Bane and Mr. Slings, the master. He had been very assiduous in his attentions to her since the first day when he handed her in to dinner. He had indeed made a great impression on Miss Bane, and had drawn from her the story of her early love, and how near she came being married to one who had become a thriving candle-maker; how, instead of marrying her, the said candle-maker went to another house in the same street, and married another woman whose initials were the same as hers! that she should always think it a mistake, and that the poor man—a Mr. Blotch—did not find it out for some time, and she forgave him if he ever did wake up to the reality of his position; for he had, she believed, caught a Tartar, his wife's hair being of a carrotty red.

Miss Bane did not often make these confidences, and it was very touching to hear her. She assured Mr. Slings that it was a great loss to society when Mr. Blotch got the other woman instead of her; that *she* would have made a great ornament to society, whereas Mrs. Blotch was a cross, peevish woman, with sore eyes and no style, and had a baby every eleventh month, which she felt sure she never would have been guilty of. She told Mr. Slings how near she came to being a millionaire, and how much Blotch lost by not marrying her. She had bought a four-acre lot just outside of Albany, for which she had paid the sum of five hundred dollars. Blotch advised her to buy it—that if the city went out in that direction she would realize a large fortune. She believed that originally Blotch was after that lot and not her, and he got punished for his perfidy by making a mistake and marrying another woman.

"To think, Mr. Slings, that she who should have laid her head on Blotch's bosom, and been the mother of his children, has lived to reward his treachery as it deserves! I have heaped hot coals upon his head, and let him use my four-acre lot near Albany to feed his cow on. Had the city gone out toward my lot I should have been a millionaire; as it is, it only serves to feed my revenge and Blotch's

cow. I wasn't sure there wasn't a mistake, and I've always thought Blotch got a little how-come-you-so, and slept in the wrong bosom by going into the wrong house at the wrong time, and the result is he feeds his cow on my lot, and I work winter socks for his children. I do hear Mrs. Blotch is very weakly, and having ten children she isn't able to take care of them."

"Well," said Mr. Slings, "but your life, mum, has been a eventful one, and if you've kept a log-book, and all the events of the watches is marked down in regular order, with position from noon to noon, force of wind, temperature of water, height of barometer, and all that, it would make a very interesting book."

"I expect, Mr. Slings," said Miss Bane, "that your life has been a very eventful one. You sailors, they say, have a sweetheart in every port. Fie, Mr. Slings, why don't you get married?"

"It ain't my fault, I assure you," said Mr. Slings; "I have been trying it on for the last ten years. In the war of 1812 I lost my arm in battle, when I was engaged to Miss Euphemia Crank, and, when I came home a hero, I expected to lead her right to the nuptial altar; but she seemed to find fault with my one arm on the ground that I could no longer hold a hank of yarn in my two hands for her to reel-off by, and she said she couldn't get on with a man of that kind; that she should miss my services, as I was the best reeler-off she ever met with, except Mr. Sprawgle, who had been very useful to her all the war, and she had accepted him conditionally, providing I didn't come home whole, because she couldn't abide a piece of a man anyhow."

"Then she married Mr. Sprawgle, and I danced at the wedding and presented the bride with her wedding-veil. I then went to sea, and never went to sleep without thinking of her. I had her virgin name, 'Euphemia Crank,' put up in my state-room. It was framed in copper thimbles taken from the store-room, and I got the ship's painter to paint a likeness of Euphemia, after my description of her, and I put it in an oak frame and crossed two sewing-mallets on the top, with two shark's hooks and chains festooned underneath."

"How touching!" exclaimed Miss Bane.

"Yes, it *was* touching," said Slings. "Mr. Sprawgle died the very day I got home from a cruise, and I hastened to the funeral and acted as chief pall-bearer, and as soon as the mourners returned from the grave I sent my name up to Euphemia and she admitted me. She looked beautiful in her woe, and I threw myself upon my knees before her and offered her my heart and hand."

“‘Too late, Slings, my friend,’ she said; ‘I was engaged yesterday, an hour after Mr. Sprawgle died. Mr. Putty saw my grief and sympathized with me, and we are to be married the first of May. I thought of your claims, my dear Slings, but then the want of that arm! and I found it would be too inconvenient.’ ‘But,’ said I, ‘since the introduction of the patent yarn-reeler it needs not have a man.’ ‘Very true,’ she replied, ‘but I am so fond of boating, and if the boat should capsize you could not swim with two—me and yourself.’ ‘That’s true,’ said I, and she married Putty. A year after, Putty took her out a-sailing; the boat capsized and Putty was drowned, but she floated ashore, kept up by her bustle.

“I had the river dragged for Putty’s body, and found it and had it borne home on a stretcher. I laid the body at her feet, and she looked more beautiful in her woe than ever. I laid my hand and heart at her feet on the spot, but she sighed and said: ‘Oh! too late again, Slings. I accepted Mr. Jump only five minutes ago, and we are to be married the first of May. The loss of that arm, dear Slings, still stood in the way. You couldn’t do a fair job in cutting wood with one arm, and I thought it a duty I owed myself to take a man with two arms. Jump swings a beautiful axe.’

“I sympathized with her and danced at her wedding, and went to sea for six months to get over my disappointment. On my return I went right up to Euphemia’s house, and as I approached the door I heard shrieks of woe. I rushed in and found that Jump had cut his foot off while chopping wood, and was bleeding to death. ‘O Slings!’ she cried, ‘run for the doctor,’ and she looked more beautiful than ever in her tears of woe. ‘Before I go,’ said I, ‘tell me if Jump dies will you accept my hand and heart?’ ‘Oh, cruel man!’ she said, ‘you will let him die before my eyes!’ I rushed off for the doctor, who passed me on some other street, and reached the house just in time to close Jump’s eyes. I rushed up-stairs to Euphemia. ‘My hand and heart is yours,’ I said; ‘take me quick!’ ‘Ah, dear Slings, too late again. Dr. Leech was with me in my affliction; he poured oil into my bruised heart, and I gave him my hand just as my Jump passed away.”

“The shameless hussy!” exclaimed Miss Bane; “to treat a man of your faithful heart so, after being true so many years. Oh, if Blotch had only been as true to me! I could die for a true man.”

There is no knowing whether Miss Bane would not have died then and there, if the music had not struck up “Home, sweet home,” in sign that the evening entertainment was over.

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At the same moment the strong hand of the reverend gentleman seized him by his long hair and brought his ugly nose in contact with the counter

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CHAPTER XXXI.

AFTER THE PARTY.

WHEN Patch got up-stairs with her new friend, the first thing she did was to throw her arms about her neck and kiss her a dozen times. "You dear, sweet thing, you," she cried; "you have been treated so inhumanly by that ichthyosaurus of a sister of mine, that I must do everything to make it up to you, and before I go to bed this night I intend to give her such a raking down that she'll treat you with the most distinguished consideration as long as you live."

"Please do nothing of the kind," urged Mary; "that course will not mend matters. The worst thing you can do to a turbid stream is to stir it up; you bring all the mud to the top. If you give it time, it will settle, and look as clear as any other water. Your sister, you tell me, is peculiar: then consult her peculiarities and don't move counter to them."

"Her peculiarities," cried Patch, "are being as disagreeable at times as it is possible for her to be, and I'm the only one that can take it out of her. I feel it a duty to society at large to tell her what I think of her, and, indeed, you must not advise me on this point. I don't think I could sleep if I didn't send off my skyrocket at her before I went to bed."

"Better lie awake, then," said Mary. "If you have any ill-feeling toward any one, always sleep upon it before you undertake to bring one to an account. For my part, I shall pray that she may be brought to like me."

"Oh, my!" said Patch. "I love you very much, and would like to oblige you, but I have a mission on earth to perform, and that is to see that my sister does not run this house altogether in the interest of Louise Morton." With this, without stopping to hear further, Patch went to Louise's room.

"Well," she exclaimed, as soon as she got in, "so you've gone and done it again! How can you look me in the face after the snobby way you have acted to-night? What would Morton *père* have said, could he have seen you to-night?"

"You foolish little chit," replied Louise; "don't come here pestering me, or I'll put you out of the room."

"You will, will you?" retorted Patch; "and I'll walk down

and knock at Commander Conrad's door, and I'll whisper something to him that will make him pack up his beautiful uniform-coat and leave in the morning boat."

"You daren't interfere with me," said her sister. "What could you say to hurt me with Conrad, you imbecile?"

Patch walked over and whispered something in her sister's ear, at which she turned pale, and, jumping up, exclaimed: "You wouldn't, for God's sake! Don't hint at such a thing, Patch. I will do whatever you want me to do."

"Then," said Patch, "treat my new chummy, Mary Samson, as a lady should be treated. If you don't!"—and she held up her finger in a threatening attitude.

Louise curled her lip, and her eyes flashed fire, but still she was subdued. "Do not interfere between me and Commander Conrad," she said, "but keep your mouth close shut, and I will do anything you ask me."

"Agreed!" said Patch.

As Patch entered the next room again, she exclaimed: "'*Veni, vidi, vici!*' which means, I combed her head with a three-legged stool. *Restez tranquille, ma chère amie*; you will never have Louise Morton attempting to snub you again. Likely to-morrow she will want to see your sketches, and she will end by wanting you to sing for her."

Good-night was said, kisses were exchanged, and Patch slipped off to her bed, while Mary, after undressing, knelt down and poured out her thankfulness to the throne of grace for all God's kindness. She had only been in this house a little over twenty-four hours, and how many—to her—wonderful events had taken place! She came as a teacher among strangers, and had been received as a daughter. She found herself launched out into a world of lovely women and handsome men, when most of the years of her life had been spent with her mother and Mr. Bernard, now in his seventieth year. She seemed to be able to read the characters of the family she had entered as if she had known them for years, and she had already formed attachments that seemed as warm and lasting as those that have existed for a life-time.

Hers were roseate dreams that night, yet there was one little blur in the illusions of the mind that seemed to annoy her. It was Harry Morton's jeering her for having red hair and false teeth. She woke up several times in the night and sighed, "Oh! why did he do so! I thought so well of him"; and she would drop asleep

again, her spirit running riot over seas of roses and silver streams, and through the spray of murmuring fountains, until the night seemed an eternity of pleasure and happiness.

Deville and Vere Saye met at the door as they were going out. "Shall I have the pleasure of your company to your quarters?" said the latter; "it is a lovely night, and it is too early to go to bed. I always feel better for a little tramp after a party."

"With pleasure," said Deville; "I do not feel like sleeping. My young friend May has gone away, and I feel lonesome. Look at the moon," he said, "reeling home to her rest after a night of debauch, with her swollen face and bleared eyes, while the twinkling stars seem laughing at her, as she rolls along to her rest in the western sky, leaving the stars alone in their glory to illumine the earth! How lovely it is when the moon is just going down, and the stars are left, like faithful sentinels, to keep watch over the motions of the earth, to walk alone in the stillness of night, and listen to the small voices that come to visit the soul with calm delight!"

"I could muse forever on a night like this, while shadows from the fitful past danced along the starlit path. Here one can walk and see the spirits of those we have loved in days long past fluttering past us. It is only in scenes and places like this that we are permitted to see these phantoms of memory, which come to visit us in our solitude, and bring back the smiles they wore in our joyous youth. On such a night as this, who that has borne sufferings that have almost made him perish by the way-side, and seen his highest aspirations crushed to earth, but does not long to commune with the spirits of those who once formed the happiness of his life! I think on such a night as this that I can see the spirit of my tender mother, as she sits and gazes at me with eyes like mellowed stars. Often she seems to chide me for faults committed, but if her lips seem to rebuke me, her dove-like eyes seem to beam blessings upon me."

"You are of a romantic temperament," remarked Vere Saye. "People of your hot Southern blood are often given to romance, and dwell on superstitions and the spiritual; but I am what you would call a cold, phlegmatic Englishman, of a sluggish blood and little imagination, and look altogether at life in a practical way. I have so few memories connected with those one ought to know and remember, that I can call up very few spirits to commune with."

"Do you know," said Deville, "that I seem this evening to have been indulging in some sweet dream, some dream of past years, where, sitting with long-lost friends, I have lived over again the life that should have belonged to my youth. I have seen to-night my mother's eyes in reality, the eyes that watched over me in childhood, and which now visit me every night before I close my eyes in sleep. What a singular beauty that Miss Samson has, and what lovely eyes—the eyes of a pure spirit!"

"Yes," said the other, "she seems to me like some one I have known elsewhere—some dream of boyhood—though I am quite sure I never laid eyes upon her before. Her beauty is heavenly, yet it is one that I should always look upon with the admiration and love of a brother. I feel as if I had known her for years, and as if it was a dear little sister I had been spending the evening with. What a charm there is, too, about Mrs. Morton! She seems to attract all who come near her. There is a singular infatuation about her regarding this girl, whom she never saw before, and whom she yet treats with the affection of a daughter."

"No wonder," said Deville; "who could treat her otherwise? She is a being to be loved and cherished by all who know her. Happy the man that will have her at his side to help pass over the thorny road of life. With such a helpmeet as that, the noiseless footsteps of time might pass along like the murmur of a silver flowing river, whose ripple scarcely wakes the echoes of the woods."

"And yet," resumed Vere Saye, "there is one in that house who is her bitter enemy; who has beauty enough of her own not to envy that of another. Did you notice the cold glitter of that other's eyes? It appalls me!"

"There, friend, let us stop," exclaimed Deville; "you are touching on tender ground. That beauty you speak of is the light of my soul; it is the *ignis-fatuus* that may lure me to destruction; it is my dream by night; it is my joy by day. There is not a hair of her head that is not more precious to me than the mines of Golconda. I love the cold glitter of her eye, as the moth loves the light of the candle which he knows will bring him death. I love the very air she breathes, though I know it is full of poison. I stretch myself at her feet as I would under the branches of the upas-tree, with the certainty that it will bring me to an early grave. She fascinates me as a serpent fascinates a beautiful bird, and yet I would not avoid her toils. Is this love?"

"No!" replied the other; "it is madness. But you astonish me. I took you for a cool philosopher, a man of the world; simply a friend who understood her temper and knew how to humor it; who knew the trouble she could lead a man into, and knowing how to avoid it. Why, she has thrown her coils around that splendid fellow Conrad, who is head and ears in love with her."

"Yes," said Deville, "and she has found her master. Good-night; here we are at the Dove, and I will walk home alone."

"More trouble," exclaimed Flossy to her father after returning home that night. "I am no nearer now than I was four months ago."

"Nearer what, Flossy, my dear?" replied Carrolton.

"Popsy," said Flossy, "don't you remember telling me that I would launch my bark on the sea of life, freighted with hopes that one could only realize in youth?—that it wasn't always May, and all things rejoice in youth and love, and that's the time to enjoy the fragrance of life and bask in the melting tenderness of love; that clouds come freighted with pelting rain and furious winds, and destroy the fullness of our youthful hopes—or words to this effect, popsy? I forget exactly how you said it, but it sounded something like. And do you know it happened just so?"

"Why, lass, what are you driving at? What happened just so?"

"Why, popsy, I've been in society five months and haven't had an offer. Now, there's George May; he's gone away in despair because Louise Morton rejected him, and I thought I was just on the point of getting his wounded spirit to lean on me. There's Deville, who treats me just as if I was his little sister; he chucks me under the chin. There's that splendid Commander Conrad; the family anaconda Louise has coiled herself around his affections. There's that sweet fellow, Harry Morton; I had no sooner let 'concealment like a worm feed on my damaged cheek' (isn't that the right quotation, popsy?), and got him to sit on one chair with me, than here turns up this beautiful creature, Mary Samson, and knocked all the hair-pins out of my head—for Harry Morton hasn't looked at poor me since she came in the house. There's that fellow, Berry Sharp, who parts his hair so sweetly in the middle; he is devoted to Patch, and I wouldn't look at him anyhow. Miss Bane has poured her sorrows into old Mr. Sling's ear, and I believe he is in treaty with her for her lot in Albany, and he sympathizes with her greatly. There's only one left me, and that is Mr. Vere

Saye, and you said he wouldn't look at me if he were in England. Now, what am I to do, popsy? I'm getting aged."

"Flossy," said Carrolton *père*, "there never was a woman yet, if she was as old as Methuselah and as ugly as a sculpin, who could not win a man if she set deliberately to work to do so. Good-night, and put that in your pipe and smoke it."

As Flossy sat before her looking-glass, taking down her long coils of beautiful hair, and looking archly at herself between her beautiful arms, she murmured: "Mr. Vere Saye, you're my fate, I see. Now look out for yourself:

" 'Now, noble Briton, hold thy own:
A maiden's toils are round thee thrown,'

or words to that effect."

Flossy laid her sweet head upon her pillow, with her golden hair lying in graceful flakes across her snow-white bosom, while the most happy smile just swept across her rosy lips, making her as beautiful a picture as the eye ever looked upon.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE TOURNAMENT.

THE next day broke forth bright and beautiful. The night had been touched by a slight breath of frost, and a richer shade of crimson tinged the foliage of the woods.

All the *habités* of the villa had assembled in the billiard-rooms, on the lawns, in the grottoes, or in the garden, when Harry Morton, coming out on the lawn with a fish-horn, blew a loud blast and summoned the company to the porch to hear the programme for the day.

When all were assembled, he announced, as the marshal of the day, that a grand tournament would take place in the ten-acre lot, at the west side of the house, at the hour of four, when loyal knights would proceed to do honor to the ladies of their preference by contending in the following games:

1st. A tournament of the ring, in which knights would tilt for the ring, with lance in rest, and the victor receive the wreath of honor.

- 2d. Casting the iron bar.
- 3d. Casting the iron weights.
- 4th. Riding at the bar.
- 5th. Jumping, wrestling, and fencing.
- 6th. Climbing the greased pole.

The programme was received with acclamation, and all the company went to work to prepare themselves for the coming *fête*.

In the field adjoining the villa property there was a large amphitheatre of rocks that overlooked the ground. There was a run of about four hundred yards, near the end of which two large saplings, properly trimmed and prepared, were put into the ground, and a thick wire stretched from post to post, in the center of which hung an iron ring, so nicely adjusted that it could be detached without difficulty.

A large tent, brought from New York, was erected near the rocks, in which tables were set out with all the creature comforts, all being under the particular charge of Miss Bane and Sailing-Master Slings. There were large tubs filled with ice and bottles of champagne; there were pitchers of iced lemonade and claret punch; there were sherry and hock, kegs of beer, tea and coffee, and all else that was necessary to make the day pass pleasantly.

The rocks that were to serve as an amphitheatre were shaded by large oaks and elms, and, for the present occasion, were covered with soft carpets, on which the ladies could recline and take their ease. Everything was done to make the tournament a success that could be on so short a notice.

Harry Morton had been engaged for three days in making his arrangements, and the gentlemen had provided themselves with horses and lances. All the neighboring gentry had been invited, and hundreds not invited, it was expected, would come in from the country to see the sport, bringing their own lunch-baskets.

Miss Louise Morton, in compliment to the house of Morton, had been elected Queen of Beauty, and a beautiful wreath of roses had been prepared with which to adorn her beautiful brow.

By three o'clock everything was prepared, and the guests began to assemble. The rock amphitheatre, with its variegated carpets, began to fill up with beautiful women in their elaborate dresses, giving it the appearance of a rich parterre of beautiful flowers. Altogether the effect was very pleasing.

At half-past three Harry Morton rode out in front on a splendid dapple-gray horse, with long flowing tail and mane, assisted by two

pursuivants, equally well mounted, and, giving three loud blasts on the fish-horn, announced in stentorian voice that the tournament would commence.

There were four entries written down, and the test was open to any acquaintance, who had the privilege of entering the lists at the last moment.

The entries were Vere Saye, Deville, Conrad, and Berry Sharp—the first under the name of the knight of the yellow sash; the second, the red sash; third, the blue sash; fourth, the sash of green and gold; each one to have four runs; the best three out of four to receive the prize.

The knights drew for the first run, and it fell to the luck of Conrad, who rode up on his agile-looking charger to the front of the Queen of Beauty, and, bowing low, requested that he might have the honor of wearing a gage presented by her hand. She immediately pulled from her middle finger a beautiful carnelian ring and handed it to him. Fastening it to the tassel of his velvet cap, he bowed and rode to the end of the lists, where, putting his lance in rest, he waited the trumpet's blast.

He was splendidly attired in an embroidered blue-velvet jacket with open sleeves, tight-fitting knit trousers, white top-boots, and white-leather gauntlets. His splendid figure showed to great advantage in this dress, and no one would have supposed, to see him casually, without noticing particularly his splendid proportions, that he was a man of such fine physique. He sat his horse like a native of the Pampas of the Argentine Confederation, which produces the best riders in the world.

Presently Harry Morton rode to the middle of the course, and having read in a loud voice the rules of the lists, he retired on one side and raised his horn to his mouth.

At the first blast the rider drove his rowels into his horse's flanks, and the animal sped away at lightning speed, while the spectators watched with anxious faces as he dashed onward toward the ring. But no! the ring was not touched, and Conrad rode on one side, looking somewhat vexed.

Then came Vere Saye, who went through the same routine as his predecessor. He was mounted on a superb sorrel, with great length of limb and great muscle. His dress was a close-fitting knit shirt of light blue, which showed his beautifully shaped and muscular arms, huge in their proportions, the muscles of his fore-arm showing like whipcords through the knit jacket. A pair of white

knit trousers encased his admirably proportioned thighs. He was pronounced altogether a splendid specimen of an Oxford man.

He rode leisurely up to the amphitheatre, while several hearts were beating with anxiety to see whom he would ask a gage from.

"Oh!" thought Flossy, "I wish he would ask me. I think him the handsomest man here, and then he looks so like the men who came over with William the Thingummy." No sooner thought than he bowed before her and asked the honor of wearing her gage. Flossy had been fingering the breast-knot on her bosom, and in nervous trepidation she tore it off and presented it to him. "Go, brave knight, and win!" she said; and then, astonished at her temerity, blushed to the roots of her hair.

Vere Saye rode off and taking his place at the end of the lists waited quietly for the signal. When it was given, his horse thundered over the plain, making the earth tremble under the united weight of horse and rider. He approached the goal with his cool blue eye riveted on the ring, and the spear gracefully poised, and the ring dropped over it as if some one had placed it there with his hand. He rode up to Flossy, and, bowing gracefully before her, rode off to the side.

The ring was then replaced and Deville's name was called. Deville was dressed similarly to Vere Saye, only that his knit shirt was a deep scarlet. It might almost be imagined that this was the same man that had just ridden. The proportions were just the same, unless it might be that Deville was a few pounds heavier, larger at the shoulder, while a heavy chord of sinew might be seen extending across the back and playing beneath the knit jacket.

He rode up in front of the Queen of Beauty, and, bowing low, asked the honor of wearing her gage. She considered for a moment, and then, taking from her waist a bunch of forget-me-nots, handed it to him with a smile. He rode off with his heart beating wildly, and, taking his place at the end of the lists, awaited the signal.

The horse which Deville rode was the most beautiful animal on the ground. He was a coal black, with flowing tail and mane, with two white hind-feet, and a small white star in the middle of the forehead. His eyes seemed to shoot forth sparks, and his wide-open nostrils looked with their pink lining as if they were breathing out flames of fire. He was full of spirit, and hard, apparently, to hold; but he was under a master, and at the word of his rider, "Hark, Prince!" he laid back his ears and stood perfectly still in the act of springing away.

The horn sounded, and he was off like an arrow out of the bow. Now was seen the perfection of riding. The horse seemed to glide rather than run over the intervening space, and Deville sat on the saddle as if he had been part of the animal, his eye fixed steadily upon the ring. When within fifty yards of the goal a tiny linnet lit right on the ring, impelled, no doubt, by curiosity to see what was going on, and, as the lance approached it closer and closer, it became fascinated and could not move. Ere one could think, the lance-point passed through the little flutterer's heart, and the ring passed over the spear-point and slid on down to his hand.

He turned his horse toward the rocks, and rode direct toward Louise Morton, and, bowing lowly, presented the dying linnet on the end of the spear. She coolly took it off, and, wiping away the blood with a bunch of grass, she placed the dead bird in her hair.

There was a shudder among the company when this incident took place, and some tender-hearted ones turned pale. Only Louise Morton could have done such a thing!

Then Berry Sharp ran his tilt on a large gray mare, which had been used in various games. He carried Patch's gage, a sunflower she pulled for the occasion. He wore it on his shoulder, and, much to Patch's delight, he carried off the ring. He was a Virginian, and his youth had been spent in these pastimes.

Then another course was run, and all four contestants carried off the ring. Then the third course was run with the same result. The fourth course was run by Conrad's horse shying, and Berry Sharp's mare refusing to run any more, and throwing the lieutenant over her head. "Poor Poodle," exclaimed Patch; "that knocked his hair out of kelter!"

Then Vere Saye and Deville, to vary the amusements, determined to start side by side and run for the ring, Vere Saye with the lance in his right hand, Deville with the lance in his left hand. This was very exciting, and many bets were made on the speed of the horses.

After some delay the two horses went off together, and now was witnessed some beautiful riding, the two steeds keeping neck and neck, and thundering over the ground at a frightful pace, neither gaining a hair's-breadth on the other, until they were within twenty paces of the ring, when both lances were poised. As the riders went under the wire both lance-points entered the ring, and they rode away with it together.

This was pronounced to be the grand *coup d'œil*, and shouts rent the air for the victors.

It was now determined to go on with some other sports, when suddenly a trumpet was heard behind the hill, and a horseman, dressed in a red-satin jacket with gold-colored silk sash around the waist, rode into the lists.

Every one recognized George May, who had for some reason returned to join in the amusements. He claimed the privilege accorded on the programme, and agreed to run four straight courses without breathing his charger, which was agreed to.

He rode up to Louise Morton, the Queen of Beauty, and requested the honor of wearing her gage. She called for the point of his lance, and placed on it by a chain a gold heart he had once presented her. He could not conceive of her meaning, but he took it as a good omen, and bowing, rode off.

He sat his horse most gracefully, and ran his four courses successfully. On the last course he placed the ring on the end of his spear, and, riding back furiously, placed it on the wire again, and then rode to the side of the lists.

This was considered the best performance, and the meed of praise was given to him.

Louise had to crown him with the laurel, which she did with not a very complaisant air, as she had promised herself the pleasure of crowning Commander Conrad.

Then came the game of pitching the bar. The bar was of iron, thirteen feet long, and weighing twenty pounds. Commander Conrad first tried his strength and skill. He threw the bar forty feet, which was considered a long flight, and the surprised audience applauded him. Then came slight, wiry George May. He was good at athletic exercises, and he threw the bar five feet further than Conrad.

Conrad applauded him the loudest. "You are a splendid fellow," he said, "and a wonder of strength." George May only answered coolly, "I thank you."

Vere Saye picked up the bar, and twirled it around as if it had been a walking-stick. Giving it a pitch, it went flying through the air and landed on its end eighty feet distant.

Then followed Deville, who twirled the bar around as a drum-major would his baton, and sent it out with apparent ease, when the end landed exactly at the side of the hole made by Vere Saye. Vere Saye went up to him and said, "That is not your best by ten feet. You can beat that."

"And you!" said Deville.

"Perhaps," said Vere Saye, "but we won't compete."

The iron weights were then brought out. These consisted of two twenty-four pound weights with rings, two fifty-six pound weights, and two one-hundred pound dumb-bells borrowed from a gymnasium.

Commander Conrad led off with a fifty-six pound weight, and threw it forty-five feet.

"Well done!" cried the crowd.

Then George May stepped up, and, handling the weight with ease, threw it fifty feet, when the crowd rent the air with shouts. It was remarkable for one so effeminate-looking, and with a face like a girl.

Then James Deville, picking up the weight and slinging it around his head, threw it eighty feet. The crowd filled the air with shouts at this evidence of strength.

Vere Saye came next. One would have thought he and Deville had been educated at the same gymnasium, they handled the weights so much alike. He slung the fifty-six pound weight around his head, and landed one inch short of Deville's cast.

"You can do better than that," said Deville to him.

"And you," said Vere Saye.

"Perhaps," he answered.

Berry Sharpe now seized the fifty-six, and fell down in the effort to throw it.

"Poor Poodle," said Patch; "he must go to school."

Then came riding at the bar, which was a fence-rail fixed on two posts, that could be elevated from five to six feet.

Conrad started with the bar five feet high. His horse went over, striking with his hind legs and knocking the bar down. It was put up again, and George May on his full-bred mare skimmed over it like a swallow.

Berry Sharp's gray mare struck it with her breast and knocked it down.

Then Vere Saye raised the bar to six feet.

"Take care!" said every one; "you're a heavy man; it is not a matter of strength."

"We'll see," he said, and mounting his sinewy sorrel he skimmed over it like a bird.

Deville followed him and cleared it handsomely, and, riding on seventy yards, turned his horse and returning at full run passed

the bar in splendid style. The cheers on this occasion were vociferous.

"I have seen some good riding in England," said Vere Saye, "and I never saw anything better than this."

"And you," said Deville, "did not do your best."

"Perhaps," he replied.

Then the athletes were invited to handle the hundred-pound dumb-bells.

Conrad gave it up. George May made a faint effort toward lifting one as high as his head; but Vere Saye, seizing them by the middle, raised them easily above his head.

Deville did the same with apparent ease, and then gave three jumps, amounting to thirty feet, with the dumb-bells in the air.

Vere Saye then picked them up and held them out at arm's length, one in each hand.

Deville did the same. Then, putting them down on the ground, he threw his heels in the air, and there remained supported by his arms. Bringing his feet to the ground, he raised the dumb-bells aloft again and finished the performance.

"That beats Oxford," said Vere Saye; "but I will try you once more." And, taking the dumb-bells and raising them aloft, he stooped and flung them into the air twelve feet, and caught them again as they came down.

"That's splendid!" said Deville, "but we shall see." Taking the dumb-bells, he threw them fifteen feet, crossed them, and caught them in different hands as they came down.

"I have never seen but one man that could do that," said Vere Saye, "and that was eight years ago in Paris. That was a young fellow called *Robert le Diable*, who was afterward transported for murder."

"Ah!" said Deville; "whom did he murder?"

"An old count," replied Vere Saye, "on account of his pretty wife, so they said; but I have my doubts about his committing the murder. I think it was an Italian fellow—one Count Montebello—who afterward married the countess, and no doubt used this youngster as a tool. I often went to see this *Robert le Diable* perform in Paris, and he was a wonder in gymnastics. He was then about nineteen, and could do as you can now."

Just then Harry Morton announced the feats of jumping, wrestling, and fencing. But the gentlemen being somewhat fatigued, some of the countrymen took that part of the programme, and

wound up with the performance on the greased pole, which caused much merriment.

Then a fencing-match was arranged between Commander Conrad and George May. Both had the reputation of being good fencers, and each prepared himself for the encounter.

The set-to was very spirited. They used a pair of George May's own foils, which had been sent out for the occasion. He evidently had the advantage of his antagonist, and "pricked" him several times. At length, determined to bring the contest to a close, he essayed to disarm him. He accordingly closed upon him and gave his wrist a twist, striking his own foil against Conrad's blade in a peculiar manner.

Conrad felt as if his arm had almost been twisted out of the socket, and at the same moment he was pierced through the breast and fell weltering in his blood.

When May saw what had happened, he rushed to Conrad's side and raised his head.

"My God!" he exclaimed; "I never will forgive myself if anything serious occurs. Are you hurt, Conrad?"

"Not seriously," answered the other; "though the plunge was a sharp one, and the broken blade of a foil always makes an ugly wound. I am bleeding profusely, and feel faint. But you are not to blame, my dear fellow; these accidents will happen—we should have fenced with chest-pads. You are terrible with the thrusts of your foil."

The moment Conrad fell there was great consternation in the crowd, and doctors were called for. Dr. Preston soon appeared and took charge of the patient, who was put in the tent and properly cared for. In five minutes the doctor announced that there was no cause of uneasiness.

"Though, by Saint Matthew, my good sir," he said, "if the poke had been two inches higher up, your goose would have been cooked. As it is, you will be all right in three days. I envy you your wound, as there will be no end of female fans at your disposal when your wound is dressed, and you are lying on your couch. I see the storm bursting already. As to you, Mr. May, I think you are more scared and hurt than your antagonist. For your carelessness I appoint you to nurse this wounded hero."

"Most willingly," said May; "I'd take all the pain and inconvenience, if that could do any good. I shall never cease to reproach myself for the accident."

"Why," said Conrad, "it was no more your fault than mine. I acquit you, and will take another bout with you when I am up again."

"But I don't acquit him," said Louise Morton, stepping into the tent. She had been standing on the outside, much agitated—for her—waiting to hear the news. She was pale, her wreath of roses had been torn off in her excitement, and part of it was hanging to her dress, and the cold glitter of her eye, and compressed lips, gave her anything but a pleasant expression.

"I don't acquit him," she again repeated. "I saw his devilish hate and purpose in his face, and felt that something was going to happen. George May, I denounce you as a murderer if anything result from this."

"I a murderer!" exclaimed George May, looking at her intently. "By what devilish ingenuity, Miss Morton, have you arrived at this conclusion?"

"Miss Morton," said Conrad, "this is unkind to me and my friend Mr. May. I might just as well have been the one to inflict the injury as he."

"And, Miss Louise," said Dr. Preston, "if you don't keep yourself in the apartments appropriated to women, I shall take the liberty of putting a tourniquet on your tongue, and perhaps a blister on your bustle."

This threat so startled Louise that she immediately beat a retreat. She at once ordered the carriage to take the wounded man to the house, expressing her determination to accompany him, doctor or no doctor.

"Ah," said the doctor, after she had left the tent, "we shall see; I once had that young woman under my charge for a whole week for a case of blue-devils, and I think at the end of the week she learned the folly of opposing the doctor."

"Here, Mr. May," said the doctor when the carriage drove up to the tent, "you get in and support your friend. Mr. Vere Saye, please sit on the front seat. Mr. Deville, please sit alongside of Mr. Vere Saye. Harry Morton, you get up with the driver. Now, gentlemen," he said, laughing, "by St. Matthew, if Miss Louise Morton gets in, it will be because you want her there. I shall drive up in my gig, and I don't think she'll get a lift from me. Drive home!"

This incident put a stop to the exercises, though the entertainment inside the tent continued until dark. But for the accident to Commander Conrad, the affair would have been perfect. As it

was, the wound was not at all dangerous, and only painful because the ragged foil had torn some of the muscles of the breast.

The accident gave Miss Morton an opportunity to show her devotion to Commander Conrad, by inquiring about him twenty times a day, and sending pretty bunches of flowers culled by her own hand, and nice little delicacies gotten up by Miss Bane, which she led him to believe were prepared by herself.

It had the effect of touching Conrad's heart, though he could not forget her unjust aspersions against his new friend May, for whom he had conceived the highest admiration for his wonderful skill, courage, and strength in manly exercises, and that in matters of feeling he had the heart of a woman.

As they left the house together to go to their lodgings, Vere Saye said to George May, "Considering that you paid Miss Morton the compliment to ask her to let you be her knight and wear her gage, it strikes me she was very vindictive in her remarks."

"Yes," said May, "bitter, unwarrantably bitter, and all this in return for a devotion that no other man has ever felt for her. I would die for that woman, and she knows it."

"Greater the pity," said Vere Saye, "that she knows it; she is as pitiless as a tiger, and will trample on the heart that loves her. I see she gave you a golden heart to wear as a gage."

"Yes," said May, taking the golden heart from the tassel of his cap, "here it is. It is a small present I once made her. She takes this way of returning it; but look!" he exclaimed, turning pale, "she has driven a steel needle through the center of the heart, and broken off the ends! Do you think she means that as a wish that mine should break?"

"You are in her way," said Vere Saye; "she evidently wants to be rid of you. She doesn't want Conrad to know that you have been her lover, and, perhaps," he said, inquiringly, "an accepted one?"

"No," said May, "I can't say that; but she held out great expectations and hopes."

"That's it," said Vere Saye; "her new love-passion for Conrad, which she does not conceal, makes her hate you now, and she wishes you had received the wound that Conrad did."

"I wish I had, poor fellow, though he is my rival. She will trample on him ere he knows it."

"No," said Vere Saye, "no one will trample on that man; he has the will of the devil, and will rule her. She has found a master,

and she will love him with a mad, wild passion, from the fact that he *will* rule her. Dogs and women are alike in that respect : they love the hand that smites them. Take my advice, May, and tear that woman's image from your heart, or, like a canker-worm, it will eat up your very soul."

"Too late, too late, my friend !" exclaimed May ; "I feel the force of all you say, but I can no more help myself than I can fly. That woman has a power over me that I can not resist. She will break my heart, and she is killing my poor friend Deville by inches."

"I know it," said Vere Saye ; "and he suffers more than you do, because he would conceal his passion."

"Has he told you so ?" said May, looking astonished.

"Yes," said Vere Saye ; "and it is a remarkable thing to see a man with his thews and sinews possessed of so soft a heart."

Here they parted, and Vere Saye went over to the tent, and inquired for the foils, which were left in the confusion lying on the ground. The button of one was gone, but the foil was not broken. He hunted on the ground for the button, which he eventually found, and, putting it in his pocket, and wrapping the foils up, he went to the "Dove" and put them away carefully.

Conrad, as the doctor had predicted, slept well that night ; the next day he lay on a sofa in his room, and was able to see some of his friends. Louise Morton sent him a bouquet, with a tender note inclosed among the flowers. He was touched with her warm expressions. "She has a kind heart," he said, "though they do say she is hard. Those are the women who love strongest. They concentrate their love as they do their hate. I would not have one of these wild, gushing little women, who love every one. Give me a love as burning as Vesuvius, and all my own. Louise Morton recognizes in me a man of will. She would not have a lover whom she can rule. I am sure she has never known the name of love ; if I thought she had, I would none of her. I would not press to mine the lips another man has touched."

With these reflections he turned over and fell into a sweet sleep.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE PONY PHAETON.

AFTER breakfast, on the day after the tournament, Vere Saye might be seen taking his way from the Dove tavern toward Morton villa, strolling leisurely along. In his hand he carried a large and beautiful basket of flowers, which now and then he would raise to his nose and inhale their fragrance. Then he would stop by the wayside, or near the edge of the wood, and pluck a wild flower or a beautiful fern, which grew there in profusion. Occasionally the leaves of a sugar-maple would come fluttering down through the air, with their rich and variegated tints, like so many red birds. These he would select and transfer to his basket.

Everything in the way of flowers was beautiful to him. He looked upon them as the most beautiful part of that revelation which God has written on the face of nature; every floweret that grows being the evidence of his love for our pleasure and happiness, and a joy to the angels, who could win a smile of approbation from their great Creator when in their fancies they could weave the designs for these precious ornaments of earth—these golden dew-drops of heaven.

He gained the house, and, as he was always expected to do, he walked in without the formality of ringing the bell—for this was a real old English house in that respect. If he found the family engaged, he would saunter through the grounds and stretch his long limbs beneath the shade, or in the velvet moss of the brilliant grottoes, whose ornamented roofs reflected the lights from numberless stalactites, the cornucopations of which were as brilliant as the stars of heaven. Here he would sit, smoke his regalia, and dream away the morning.

This morning there seemed to be no one either in the house or grounds. Vere Saye did not think it time to visit the wounded man, so he went to the back of the house, and there he saw, beneath the shade of a wide-spreading linden, what he supposed to be the dress of Miss Morton. Sure enough, it was she, sitting there with her embroidery-frame in her hand—the only work she was ever known to do—and apparently musing over her task.

Vere Saye had never made friends with Louise Morton. She had disliked him from the first time she had ever seen him, and had

given him a decided cold shoulder, as she had done to many others since she first went into society, without assigning any reason. She simply said, "I dislike his looks." That was all, and she considered that reason enough for any one.

When Vere Saye saw her sitting under the tree, he said to himself: "I will go and speak to this wayward young lady, and see if I can make friends with her. I have not really tried yet, and perhaps there is some good in her that I can draw out."

He advanced over the soft sward that formed the garden paths, his footsteps scarcely making a sound. Louise sat with her eyes fixed on some distant object, without apparently seeing anything, her thoughts, no doubt, engaged on something of a most pleasant nature.

Vere Saye stopped for a moment and gazed at her. He admitted that he had never in his life seen any one more exquisitely beautiful. Her eye had all the softness and beauty of the gazelle. Her rich, full lips were slightly parted, and her white teeth glimmered between them like pearls. Her hair hung in rich profusion over her neck and shoulders, and the whole pose of her figure, in its easy abandon, would have made a good subject for a painter.

Suddenly she awoke from her reverie, and turned her face to where Vere Saye was standing, wrapped in admiration of the picture before him. Her whole expression changed in a moment; her figure became stiff and formal, the face rigid and severe. The lips closed over the pearly teeth, and the soft gazelle look of the eye changed to one of stern defiance. It was as if a dark cloud had passed over the beautiful face of nature that he had been admiring but the moment before, or as if a hail-storm had obliterated a beautiful garden, where parterres of flowers and hedges of roses had bloomed in profusion.

He advanced toward her, notwithstanding her forbidding looks, anticipating a cool reception. But he had been in gales of wind, and weathered many a storm; and hence was not at all deterred by the cold, glittering, steely eyes that glared on him as he approached.

When within ten feet of her he took off his hat and bowed, saying, "I hope I have the pleasure of seeing Miss Morton well this morning."

"To what," she said, coldly, "am I to attribute the honor of this visit, Mr. Vere Saye?"

"To nothing but my desire to know better a lady whose beauty

commands my highest admiration, and whose virtues are on every man's tongue."

"Did it ever strike you, sir, that it is the privilege of a lady not to be intruded on in her privacy?"

"That is true," said Vere Saye; "and I am the last one to intrude on such privacy; but when I see one of God's fairest creatures sitting in the golden light, surrounded by Nature's choicest gifts, the flowers of earth, I feel like holding communion with her. Does your heart ever tell you that, no matter how bright are the leaves which you are weaving in golden tissues with your hand, they can not compare with the golden flowers glowing at your feet, and pouring out their aroma in honor of your beauty? See! I have brought a basket of the choicest flowers, thinking you might be a lover of these treasures of nature. They are both from the woods and from the bower."

"Why should you bring me flowers?" she asked, sternly. "Flowers are gifts we receive only from those we love, and you are my enemy."

"Who knows who loves?" replied Vere Saye. "Some men may be satisfied to worship from afar, deeming themselves too unworthy to approach a divinity they think too far above them."

"If that is your malady," retorted Louise, "pray don't get rid of it. Distance often lends enchantment to the view. I accept flowers only from those I love."

"Miss Morton, I took some hours to cull these flowers. Since early daylight I commenced, so that the leaves and petals could have the early morning dew upon them. Dew is nectar to the flowers, as champagne was nectar to the gods. I love at night to sit and listen to the dew as it falls from heaven into the parched mouths of the rich flowerets that have been suffering all day with the heat. I love to hear the flowers rejoice and thank their Maker for the freshness he sends them. Yes, flowers speak their joy as all nature does; their language is quaint and olden, and dates far back to the time when Adam and Eve tended beautiful flowers in Paradise. Behold these rich clusters of gold, and scarlet, and purple, white, yellow, and pink! How beautifully they harmonize? It is from these flowers that painters take their hints, yet who so expert that they gild the petals of the lily as this is gilded—or paint the color of this ruby rose, which seems to have been dyed in the richest blood?"

"This basket, Miss Morton, contains a world of truths, which

we would do well to read as we stumble on through life, and trample them under our feet ; truths, if we would but study, would reveal to us more of God's goodness than printed books. These gorgeous blood-red roses, almost smarting the eye with their colors shining in the sunlight, might be likened to the flaunting lass who, in tissues of gold and gay ribbons, resembles buds just opening to the dew, and quickly going to decay under the scorching rays of the sun. Look at these glowing azalias ! they seem to start in life with the most brilliant hopes, yet ere their short day is over we meet them thrown out upon the lawn, shorn of their glory, and dying from disappointed hopes. Their tender loves have been, no doubt, nipped in the bud, and they expire away from the aid of friends, their worldly desires and sweetest wishes all unfulfilled.

" See these lilies, how beautiful they are ! I think Solomon has said that woman arrayed in all her beauty is not so beautiful as one of these. See how they glow with splendor, as their petals caress the pink cheeks of that rose ! Think you they can not feel like us ? Think you that God has placed these things on earth, instinct with life, and not given them thoughts and feelings, far more refined than anything emanating from our souls ?

" See this clematis with its beautiful clusters ! See with what child-like credulity it puts forth its tender feelers, seeking acquaintanceship with some thorn-filled bush that will pierce it with a million spikes. Foolish tenderness, unripe years, in which you let your buds expand before their time ! Is not this a fit illustration of how akin these flowers are to human things ?

" These flowers are the thermometers and barometers which tell us of the daily changes of the seasons. When winter first begins to throw off his coat of snow, and affects to loll in the lap of spring, we first are told in voices of flowery joy, by these white and gold daisies which are glowing in the woods thick as the stars in heaven, that another spring is born, that summer and autumn will come anon, with tinted leaves of trees and falling cones of pines. The opening shells of nuts are all Nature's barometers, to tell us that winter is by. We may invent instruments of the most cunning kind, but none will point so true as flowers and leaves, those perfect indications of Nature's ways. We study wisdom often from the tiny flower lying at our feet, as Newton studied the cause of the earth's motion from the falling of an apple. These beds of flowers surrounding you here, are the great laboratories of Nature, given to us by God for our use. Do we ever think of the manifold uses to

which they all can be put, besides the pleasure they afford the eye ?

"Do we remember that in them we see the working of the self-same powers that govern us—wandering aims, gorgeous ambitions, burning desires, glistening tears, creeping subservience, bright hopes, flaunting vanity, grasping avarice, wild destruction, enduring love, and undying devotion ? All these may be daily witnessed in these messengers of Nature lying here unheeded at your feet. Will you take my flowers, and study from them Nature's beautiful workings ?"

"No !" she said ; "you talk as if you loved flowers, and yet you use them but for a hidden purpose. I should fear an asp hidden away in them, if I accepted them from your hand."

"Miss Morton !" he replied, reproachfully and sorrowfully, "why do you hate me so ?"

"When the partridge," she replied, "sees the hawk soaring over the field she crouches in the fern, she scents an enemy. The shoals of tiny fish scent the shark afar, and scatter in all directions when he appears."

"This," said Vere Saye, "is really lamentable ! I never knew a case so unfair. Here have I been domesticated only for some ten days within stone's throw of you, with scarcely an opportunity to speak to you, never having done you a harm in thought or deed, and yet you seem to hate me with a malignity I can not understand. I have sat unseen and gazed on your supreme beauty, and wondered if the soul corresponded with its gorgeous casket. I deemed you free from all the faults of your sex, and yet I find you full of hate for me, who have looked upon you with such admiration—not with the passion with which man would look upon your sex, but with that purity of feeling with which a brother would look upon a beloved sister he thought too pure for earth. Then why this hatred ?"

"I do not know," she said ; "but the gentle lamb will flee from the approach of the marauding eagle, and the mouse trembles when he sees the murderous cat. What would you more ?"

"What would I more ?" he exclaimed. "If I saw an ugly spider crawling on this beautiful rose, I would crush it so that it would not sting the flower. If I saw a beautiful lily fading away in the early morn, ere the dews of heaven had left its leaves, I would say, 'There is a canker-worm at the root—I must dig down and kill the worm.' If I saw a rich plate-mirror obscured by a

poisonous breath, distorting the reflection of your glorious form, I would wipe away the moisture and let your form appear in its own fair proportions. I would eradicate this disease from your mind, and let you see things as they are. You would then look upon me as your friend, as all men wish to be, for your loveliness is beyond compare."

"Oh!" she said, "you talk well, but I am afraid you are the serpent that beguiled Eve. No doubt he came in just such form as yours. The highest angel in heaven, God's great favorite, whose oily tongue led half the host of heaven astray, was driven out by the fiery sword of Gabriel, for lying and deceiving. Who can be trusted on earth when the angels of God deceive? I wish I could believe you."

"To wish," replied Vere Saye, "is the first step toward succeeding. We wish to reach the highest steps of fame, and lo! we are there before we think the journey begun. We long to see the wonders of the world, and put a girdle around the earth, and, behold! we have done it before we know the lapse of time. A mountain stands in our way; we wish it down, and lo! with wishing and determination and ample means, the mountain disappears. The strange phantasy that affects your mind, is the mountain in the path, which you can remove by wishing, and if the mountain won't move, you can do as Mohammed did, go to the mountain. Will you accept my flowers? it is the first step to leveling the hill that stands between us. If you will not accept them for yourself, present them in your own name to the wounded officer. He loves flowers."

"Does he truly love flowers?" exclaimed Louise, her eyes softening and her face losing its hard expression; "does he understand the language of flowers? and will these convey any meaning that will give him pleasure? If so, I will accept them with thanks. I do believe you are better than I thought, and I will not judge you quite so harshly again, until I have an opportunity of knowing you better. Why should you want to be my enemy? It was, perhaps, foolish in me to think so."

"Why should I?" replied he; "why is it not more for my interest and happiness to be your friend? I have tried to be so ever since I came here, but could not succeed against the cold looks you have cast upon me, for which I could never account. Why was it?"

"I scented danger in the air," she answered. "The bird knows not why it dreads the snake that fascinates it."

"Let it all pass," said Vere Saye, "and let me tell you how and in what way I have longed to show my regard for you, and yet I have been afraid of a refusal. Don't stare so," he said quietly; "it is nothing that would bring a frown to your brow or a blush to your cheek."

"What could you have to offer me that would give you pleasure?"

"A very trifling thing," replied he. "Before I came up here it was my intention to go to Saratoga, and, as I was told it was a fashionable place, I proposed, like most young men, to cut a swell. There had just arrived by the packet from England a most beautiful phaeton, and harness to match, and, being taken with the toy, I purchased it before any one else could see it. It was the only one of the kind in the market. I then looked for a pair of ponies to match, and found a pair of the most beautiful cream-color I ever laid my eyes on. I have sent for them to come here. I have laughed often when I thought of my folly in buying the turn-out. What would my great hulk of a body do in that beautiful, fragile vehicle, with a pair of ponies I could carry on my shoulder?"

"Well!" inquired Louise, "what have I to do with all this?"

"You have everything to do with it. I want you to accept the ponies and phaeton. Don't shake your head. You would look like a young queen driving her golden horses around, or in the early morn driving her dappled steeds. Don't you love driving yourself? You have the loveliest country in the world to drive in."

"I never tried driving myself," she answered. "I doubt if papa would let me drive myself."

"Then you do not know the pleasure of a country life. You go out with your nerves unstrung, and the moment you take the reins the blood goes spouting through your veins. The spirited horses give your arms enough to do, and in ten minutes your whole body is all aglow with health. All the doctors in creation could not do as much for one in a month, as a phaeton and pair would do in a day. They would drive away the blue-devils from the veriest dyspeptic. We are all more or less subject to the attacks of that enemy. It is dyspepsia that oftentimes makes us see a bitter foe in the best of friends. There is no accomplishment so becoming to a lady as knowing how to drive; nothing so improves her physique. Will you accept my phaeton, and remove another mountain from our path of friendship?"

"But I promised you no friendship. The partridge can not in a moment cease trembling in the presence of the hawk."

"I will trust to time for that, and your own good sense. I'll stand my chances with others. But, leaving me out of the question, accept the phaeton for your own sake, and the pleasure it will give you."

"But," said Louise, "how am I to learn to drive, with no one to teach me?"

"The tiger will sit beside you on the *coupé* and instruct you in driving. But think what a pleasure it would be to Commander Conrad to be driven out by you. He will be able to ride out in three days more."

He watched her closely as he said this. She started as if something unexpectedly pleasant had fallen on her ear. Her eyes brightened and her cheek flushed, she looked like herself etherealized. Her face beamed with joy. "Yes," she said, "I will accept your gift if mamma consents. I am churlish to think you are my enemy when there is no reason for being so. And how could you harm me anyhow? My instincts may be wrong; the dove may tremble in her nest when the eagle is not nigh; the partridge may tremble in the fern when the hawk doesn't know she is there. The partridge will tremble no more. You may remove the mountain that stands between us, if you will. Yes, he will love to ride, and I shall drive him. What pleasure it must be to drive one who—I mean one who is convalescing. When will the phaeton be here? I long to see it. There! take my hand in sign of amity; I, no doubt, have done you a wrong in judging you to be my enemy. What folly in me! I will send these flowers to *our* friend. Good-morning, good sir!—for now I shall consider you a friend, until I know to the contrary." And she moved away gracefully, with her embroidery and flowers, and soon disappeared in the house.

He watched her smilingly as she moved away, until she was lost to view; he then turned, and sauntered toward the "Dove."

"Ah!" he muttered—

"'Was ever woman in such humor woo'd,
Was ever woman in such humor won!'"

A basket of flowers, an oily tongue, and a phaeton and ponies, will win any woman on earth."

He went home and wrote a letter to his agent to send the phaeton, ponies, and "tiger" up by the earliest boat; and walked down

to the landing to see that the letter would be delivered by one of the hands.

He returned from the boat *via* the Hawks' Throne, the old oak, and there he found Deville sitting idly, smoking a cigar.

"Sir Walter Raleigh, when he returned from America to England," said Vere Saye, "was considered a most pernicious person for using the weed. The first man that saw him smoking thought him on fire, and threw a bucket of water on him to put him out. If Raleigh could only have known how many followers he would have, he would have been much flattered. Certainly, if there is a luxury on earth, it is smoking a good Havana cigar."

"Yes," replied Deville; "I have buried some unpleasant thoughts under the smoke of a Havana. It cost me just twelve and a half cents to lay the blue-devils that haunted me fearfully last night and all this morning."

"You are not one, I should think," said Vere Saye, "who would keep company with blue-devils long—you take life so placidly. I have never seen your equanimity disturbed, although I am sure you have had something to try you within the last few days."

"I have had worse in my life," said Deville.

"Your life must have been a bed of roses compared to most men of your age," said Vere Saye. "You are scarcely twenty-eight years old. You have health and a physique to be envied, and I am told you are one of the richest bankers in New York. What more would you have?"

"Peace of mind; without which all the rest is valueless."

"Can I aid you in obtaining it?" said Vere Saye. "I am much interested in you and all that concerns you. Your performances yesterday won my admiration. They are the most astonishing I ever witnessed."

"Not more astonishing than the feats you can perform," responded Deville. "I know your strength by the way you go to work. You handled those hundred-pound dumb-bells as if they had been of wood, and you did not let yourself out—but neither did I."

"Very likely," said Vere Saye; "we ought to be of the same strength, for we are of the same size in every respect, and we have evidently been instructed in the best schools. There is nothing a man can not learn in athletics at Eton and Oxford. I don't know where you picked up your skill."

"Over the world," replied Deville, "and mostly at sea."

"But, strong as we are, neither of us is as strong as the youth I told you of that I met in Paris eight years ago. He was but nineteen years old then, and a wonder of strength. I saw a powerful man aim a blow at him on his first appearance in the ring as *Robert le Diable*. He caught the fellow's blow with the left hand, and, seizing him by the ankle with the other, he threw him ten feet in the air, landing him in the net used for catching fallers from the tight-rope."

"I would scarcely believe that if you had not told me," said Deville.

"I took a great fancy to him," continued Vere Saye, "and went to see him several times. He could beat you at the dumb-bells, I think."

"Perhaps," said Deville, laughing.

"I attended his trial for the murder of the count. He was condemned and sent to the galleys, but I am perfectly satisfied of his innocence. A trap was laid for him, and he was merely the one on whom all the suspicion was cast."

"And could that be proved?" said Deville, earnestly and setting his lips. "But why should I, who never saw him, take an interest in the poor lad? Yet I sympathize with all young people in trouble, and no doubt would have spent a small fortune to get him off if I had been present. French laws and findings are infamous, and nine times out of ten French judges decide wrong."

"Do you know," said Vere Saye, "that you remind me very much of that young fellow, *Robert le Diable*?—only he had very light hair and a fair English complexion, and the most perfect teeth I ever saw."

"Rest assured," said Deville, laughing, "that I am not the man. I never committed a murder, and was never transported—except in the way of falling in love, but that has led me into a great deal of trouble, and may send me to the galleys in the long run."

"Of course not! of course not!" said Vere Saye, confused; "I did not mean the comparison in that way. But the likeness is great, and I believe that was the first thing that made me take an interest in you."

"Then you do take an interest in me?" said Deville.

"The strongest," answered Vere Saye; "and only wish I had some way of showing my friendship for you; but that is out of my power. You are rich beyond your desires, and you have hosts of friends. What more would you?"

"I have no *friends*," replied Deville, "except in the common acceptation of the word. I admit no man to my friendship. I am fond of George May, he is such a sweet fellow, but I believe in no one. There are inducements that will tempt any man to violate friendship. I never had any one who professed to love me, or who called himself my friend, who did not betray me. Let us then be good acquaintances, which will be more lasting than friendship."

"I don't know what there is about me that is repellent," said Vere Saye. "This morning I offered a young lady my friendship, and she scorned it; now I offer it to you, and, though you refuse it in gentler terms, yet you refuse. She told me she scented an enemy in me, that the dove trembled on her nest when the hawk is near. What is there in me so wanting in magnetism that people withdraw from me?"

"Nothing in you," said Deville, "but want of confidence in themselves. I am sure your friendship would honor any of them. If ever I give my friendship to any one it will be to you."

"What could I ask more?" said Vere Saye; "and now come to the villa, and perhaps we shall be able to see that splendid fellow Conrad. Meanwhile I will beat you a game of billiards."

"Perhaps," said Deville; "let us try."

They went to the billiard-room, took off their coats, and commenced a game that not only astonished themselves but all the lookers-on. They played an hour and scored, Vere Saye, 496, and Deville ran out the 500.

"You can beat that game," said Deville.

"Perhaps," said Vere Saye; "but one thing is certain, no one can beat us."

"Except George May," said Deville; "he is the best player I know. Now let us go and see Commander Conrad."

They found the commander sitting up, looking pale but very interesting.

On a table near his sofa was a beautiful basket of flowers, which Vere Saye immediately recognized as the one he presented to Louise Morton. It had a card attached to one of the handles, with the simple words *pour vous*, written in a small, feminine hand—nothing more. What *could* have been more expressive?

"See," said Conrad, "how bearable this imprisonment is made! That lovely girl a short time since sent me this beautiful basket of flowers, plucked with her own hand."

"To which beautiful girl do you allude, Commander?" asked Vere Saye, smiling; "there are several of them here."

"I mean," he said, decidedly, "the beautiful girl *par excellence*, Miss Louise Morton, whom I admire more than any woman I ever met, and to whom, *Deo volente*, I intend to offer my hand as soon as the opportunity offers."

George May had been a close attendant on Commander Conrad since the accident occurred, and was sitting at the foot of the sofa when he made this speech. He had not left Conrad's side a minute since he was carried home. He grieved so intensely over the injury he had inflicted on Conrad that it was pitiable to see him. He had dressed Conrad's wound, lifted him whenever he required to be moved, handed him beverages, and put him to bed. Had Conrad been his best friend, instead of his rival, he could not have done more for him.

"May," Conrad had said to him, "I would willingly be pricked again to have secured such sweet friendship." But when Conrad made the remark about offering his hand to Louise Morton, May jumped up as if he had been shot, and, taking his hat, walked quietly out of the door, to the surprise of every one except Deville, who knew the reason.

Things were getting considerably mixed about this time. Here were three men desperately in love with Louise Morton, and each one determined to win her if he could, and yet it was necessary for each, if he wished to carry his point, to observe to the other the most perfect courtesy, or else go away and leave the field open to them.

May's departure caused a silence to fall upon the company for a few minutes, but in a short time the young men got to chatting again, and the event was forgotten. Conrad expressing a desire to sleep, they left him, when he dropped off into a deep slumber, and dreamed that he was wandering through the woods with Louise. He slept nearly two hours, and when he awoke George May was sitting by his side, tenderly watching him, apparently having recovered his equanimity, and returned to his allegiance and his friend.

"Why, May, my dear fellow," said Conrad, "you went off so suddenly that I thought something had happened to you."

"Only a pain, to which I am subject when I don't take exercise," replied May. "I mounted my horse and rode briskly for an hour and a half, and Richard's himself again. It is time now to take your drops, or your fever will come on again."

George May had been struck as with a shot when he heard state what he intended to do, and could not have relied on himself at the time if his life had depended on it, but after the ride he had returned to his senses, and gone back to his couch.

That evening, just before dinner, Vere Saye drove up to town in a most beautiful double pony phaeton, which had come from the Rip Van Winkle. The phaeton itself was English built, with all the newest appointments. It was painted plum-colored, with wheels of the same, picked out with red. The seats and harness were *drap Cordovan*. There were two beautiful silver-plates on the high dasher, and the harness was mounted heavily in silver. The horses were exquisite—a pair of beautiful cream-colored horses with banged tails, which was just becoming the fashion.

But to crown all this was the most perfect little "tiger" ever laid eyes on. Prince Golden Hair could not have come in a more unique turn-out. He did not appear to be more than three years old, yet he behaved like a perfect little man. He was in a full-suit tiger's rig—a close-fitting, plum-colored coat, corduroy breeches, top-boots, and a hat with cockade. He weighed just thirty-four pounds. He sat up on the coupé with his legs folded, looking as serious as a judge; but when the phaeton stopped he sprung down to the ground and placed himself at the heads, with an air as much as to say, "Let them try to run over me!"

Louise had only mentioned Vere Saye's request to her father, saying that she would use his phaeton to drive herself, and that Mr. Morton consented until her father's return, provided so long as her father could be found to accompany her. Mr. Vere Saye looked thoughtful and heavy; she wouldn't have Deville or George May. He expressed no desire to go, and she would have no one but Commodore Conrad. So it was decided that, as soon as he was able, he should drive him out.

When the phaeton drove to the door, all the family, with the dog and *Bene Trovato* at the head of them, ran to look at it.

"Whose is it?" said Patch. "What a dear little too-tiger! Oh, aren't those lovely ponies? Did you ever see any so beautiful as that phaeton? Whose is it?"

"Mine," said Louise. "Mr. Vere Saye sent for it for me to drive myself in; it is at my disposal as long as I want it, and when I am not in it, one else is going to ride in it, I promise you that."

"And pray, Miss Graball," retorted Patch, "when did you and Apollo Belvedere become chummies? It was only two days ago I heard you say that he was a vampire and a cold-blooded tiger, or words to that effect; that you believed he was old Clootie himself in disguise, and, though his foot is so small, you believed a hoof would be found inside his boot on examination. Didn't you tell me that, miss? And now you are in *cahoots* with him, and going to drive the tails off those cream-colored ponies in a week! If you think, Miss Graball, that you're going to have all this to yourself, you are very much mistaken. I'll tell Apollo Belvedere what you said."

All this time Vere Saye was listening to Patch, and smiling at Louise's confusion at the exposure of her duplicity; but Patch had an object in view, and was determined not to lose sight of it. At her last words Louise looked daggers at her, and sprang at her as if she was going to strangle her. "For God's sake, Patch!" she exclaimed, "hold your tongue, and don't make me feel like the most ungrateful wretch in the world."

"You said, you know, Louise," said Patch, in a loud voice, "you know you said—"

"Hush, Patch," said Louise, in a smothered voice, "or I'll strangle you!"

"Yes, you know you said that Apollo Belvedere—"

"Patch, what do you want?" said Louise. "You're after something; don't talk so loud."

"Yes, I am," replied Patch. "I'm after going snacks in that pony phaeton. If you think that you and Commander Conrad are going to have it all to yourselves, you are mistaken. It has really been sent up to entertain the officers of the Curlew. That's the view papa will take of it when he comes. That's the view I take of it, and if you think that Mr. Poodle is not going to drive me out—two-forty pace—you are mistaken."

"Angeline," interposed Mrs. Morton, "take care! take care!"

"Yes, mamma, but she said—"

"No matter what I said," interrupted Louise; "I don't object at all to your driving now and then; only," she whispered, "don't let that man know all I said about him."

"Yes," said Patch, musingly, "you know you can't sleep with the pony phaeton."

"Why, of course not," said Louise; "I am willing you should have it now and then, but don't mortify me any more."

"Will you want it," said Patch, "when you and Conrad are sitting under the old oak?"

"No, not exactly," said her sister.

"And you can't drive," said Patch, "when you and Conrad are boating on the river. And you know, when you went out with him the other day, you and he drifted almost to West Point."

"Of course I shan't want it then."

"And you can't drive out by moonlight just now," continued Patch, "for you don't drive well enough to be trusted with a sick man."

"Perhaps so," said Louise.

"And you won't want to drive Sundays after church," resumed Patch; "you know you don't think that genteel."

"Patch," said Louise, "I won't stand your tyranny. I defy you. You intend, you think, to have all the riding to yourself. I am not going to put up with it. This phaeton is for me."

"You know you said," whispered Patch, "that if ever a man had hoofs, horns, and a tail, with a harpoon at the end of it, that man was my Apollo Belvedere, Mr. Vere Saye; and you also said that if you knew where to find Macbeth's witches, you'd brew a charm that would take him off quicker than lightning."

"Patch," cried Louise, "I have to submit, because I have been fool enough to say so many things before you, and to confide in you; but I'll pay you off for this. I'll never confide in you again."

"Pshaw! you leaky old thing! You could no more have anything happen to you without telling me than you could fly. If you hadn't me to tell you'd burst with holding it. Why, you're as leaky as the old Curlew, which Poodle informed me yesterday leaked twenty strokes a minute."

"Drive when you will," said Louise, "but don't interfere with my plans."

"You won't object to my having this little rooster of a tiger to go along and sit with his arms across his chest. You know, Louise, the first time you take Conrad the Corsair out you'll not want any eavesdroppers. Here, you little rooster, what is your name?"

"My name is Chic," said the little fellow, whom the reader will recognize as his former friend Midget.

"Why, you poor little toots, you do look as if you had just come out of the shell."

"Not that sort of chic, miss," said the little fellow. "Chic, for the French; Natty, I think, is the English of it."

"Well, Mr. Chic," said Patch, "all you have to do is to see this turn-out ready to drive me out whenever Miss Morton is not using the vehicle."

"I suppose, miss," said Chic, touching his hat, "that the hosses are to be fed sometimes; leastwise I don't know any hosses in New York as goes without eatin', miss; and these hosses ain't diffrent from no other hosses."

"Chic," said Patch, "don't you put on any of your knowing airs with me about your hosses. I know as much about such things as you, you little chinquapin. Drive them round to the kitchen and tell the cook to give them some buckwheat cakes."

"And some coffee, miss, cos hosses always has coffee with their buckwheats."

"Of course, you little stupid," she said; "you don't suppose I'd expect horses to go without their coffee."

"Patch," said Louise, "you are the most ridiculous child I ever heard of; you betray your ignorance so."

"Yes," retorted Patch, "I know; but, Louise Morton, I'm one too many for you, and you know it."

Vere Saye was very much amused at this by-play, at least as much as he could hear of it, for it was carried on, on Louise's part, in suppressed tones. Fierce as she was to those over whom she could tyrannize, she had to give in to her younger sister, who knew a great many of her secrets, and who, though sweet and kind to every one else, was a pitiless tyrant to Louise, whom she knew to be cruel in disposition, and hard to every one that became fascinated with her beauty.

"Now, Chic," said Vere Saye, "drive to the stable and see the horses well taken care of, and hold them in readiness to go out when they are wanted. Never mind giving them buckwheat cakes and coffee this evening. They might send them down some calves'-foot jelly and chocolate-cream and sponge-cake, and if the horses are fools enough to like hay better, we'll let them have hay, and divide the cream and jelly and cake among the stable-boys, for they will sour and hay won't."

"Won't it?" said Patch. "That shows how little you know about it. You mean to tell me hay won't *turn*? Didn't I see our men turning hay the other day after mowing?" Patch ran off, laughing at what she considered her smartness.

"My man," said Vere Saye to Louise, "sent you a whip not worthy to hold in your hand. The true style of a lady driver is

judged of by the manner she holds her whip ; but that depends upon the style of the instrument. If it is a short, stubby whip, there is no style in it ; if it is a long whip, with a long lash, it is vulgar. It must be what sporting men call 'natty'—handsomely mounted from the handle up, and tapering off to the smallest point, like the finest trout-pole, with a lash not heavy, like that of a stage-driver's, but a small, hard silk lash, which, when it strikes a horse, makes him think a horse-fly is after him, and you need only lay it on him once in an afternoon. A horse has the best memory of any animal in the world. He remembers a *cut*, which can not be said of a good many men."

"I am very much indebted to you," said Louise, "for the great pleasure that you have given me, and I hope you did not hear those silly remarks of my young sister, who is half idiot at best, and very malicious. She loves to annoy me."

"I heard nothing that I could find fault with, Miss Morton, and I am a little deaf at times, which may be often a blessing. It prevents a man hearing the truth spoken about him. As to your sister being an idiot, she is the sweetest and most interesting idiot I ever met with. I shall go to New York to-night," he continued ; "can I perform any commissions for you ? I shall be too happy."

"No, thank you," said Louise ; "you have done enough for me already. I can't thank you enough for what you have done."

"*Au revoir*, then, Miss Morton," and he departed for the "Dove" tavern.

Louise Morton looked after him steadily and malignantly for several minutes. "Why do I hate that man so ?" she muttered ; "he talked me into good humor with him with his beguiling tongue yesterday, in spite of myself. He talks so beautifully—so did Satan when he beguiled Eve—yet I am indebted to him for a pleasure I feel will bring me great happiness ; but there is something about him that makes me feel my inferiority. Is it because I am so wicked, and he so good and noble ? or is it because he is my secret enemy, and instinct tells me to avoid him ? But why should he be my enemy ? He is a gentleman by birth and education ; why should he want to injure me ? He can't want to marry me for my wealth and position. I can only tell him no ; and he would only be one more under the wheels of the juggernaut. The trouble is, that man is too good. He is above all things and temptations of life. He loves to show his superiority. If I were to marry him, he would be a walking reproach to me all the days

of my life. All my faults would stand out in bold relief by the side of his virtues, and I should hate him so that I could poison him. I hate him now ; what would I do if I were tied to him for life ? But, thank God, there is no chance of that. A happier fate awaits me, wicked as I am, if my plans all work right." And with glowing looks she went up to her room to get ready for dinner.

After Patch had let off her last piece of wit she and Mary Samson, *Bene Trovato* and the dogs, went to the Hawks' Throne, *Bene Trovato* riding on his favorite Jupiter, and under the branches of the old oak they were amusing themselves to their hearts' content when Harry Morton appeared in the distance, walking along very disconsolately.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MARY AND HARRY MORTON.

MARY SAMSON had been in the house five days, and Harry Morton had not yet had the opportunity to speak to her. He had admired her immensely from the first time he saw her. He could not forget that happy moment when he held her in his arms, her pale face resting on his shoulder, her faint breath mingling with his. He remembered his pleasurable astonishment when he found her again in the music-teacher, whom he with the rest of the family so much dreaded. He remembered her reserve in the carriage, which he thought so maidenly, but he could not account for the frigidity with which she received him on all occasions when he encountered her. He had never by any accident caught her eye ; she never even looked toward him when he came in her presence. If he made a remark to her she would simply say "yes !" or "no !" and then turn away and converse with some one else.

It was not timidity, for she would laugh and talk with Vere Saye or Deville as if she had known them for months. Oh, how he longed to be placed on the same terms of intimacy !

As soon as he saw her under the oak he walked toward the spot, but he had no sooner joined them than Mary rose and proposed returning to the house.

"Angeline, dear," she said, "it is time for dinner."

So Patch, mounting *Bene Trovato* on Jupiter, scampered off with the dogs, leaving Mary and Harry in the position she most dreaded.

She was very quiet and reserved as they started off, and refused. The woman is always the most collected on such occasions.

Harry thought of every subject in the world, but his tongue was tied. He could not speak now when the opportunity afforded him. Mary walked on, looking serenely ahead. At last Harry burst out, "Miss Samson, do you know that the tree under which you have been sitting is four hundred years old? Many an Indian king and his court have dined under its branches?"

"So I have been informed," she replied, in her soft voice.

"These hawks," he resumed, "are considered of royal blood and none visit this tree except those who have descended from this stock. If a hawk of other blood came here the rest would drive him and remove his body some distance from the tree."

"Indeed!" said Mary.

"Miss Samson," said Harry, turning round upon her, "the only thing you can say to me when you are so lavish of your kindness with others? Have I ever offended you? Do you want to do me wrong? What have I done to deserve this treatment?"

She stopped, and faced him too, and looked steadily into his eyes with her mild brown ones—those beautiful orbs whose shadows were reflected like the stars in clearest crystal water.

"You have not offended me," she said, her voice quivering slightly and a small tear glistening on the end of her eyelash, "oh! you have hurt me; and why should you, whom I thought noble and generous, wish to hurt me, who am a dependent on the bounty of your mother?"

"I hurt you!" he cried, starting back in amazement at her looks of horror; "I hurt you—you for whom I would lay down my life, you whose coming here has added a charm to my life I never possessed before, and which seems to me now more like a phantom of a dream, the spirit floating from the bosom of a lake, than reality! In the name of all that is sacred, how could I hurt you? By what act of omission could I have caused you displeasure, for I am as sure as that truth lies on your lips I have sunshine in a sinless heart, that I have neglected no courtesy toward you. There is some great mistake here."

"Ah!" she said, "would that there was," and there came a shadow of sorrow across her face as she stood there looking so youthful and lovely, her golden, chestnut tresses outshining

radiance of the sun. Even the freshness of the flowers that rose on the air, seemed to cling round her as the most beautiful spot in nature where it could find a place to linger.

"Tell me," he said, "my fault. It is unjust to me to keep me in suspense. Who has maligned me? If it is a man, I will deal with him; if a woman, I will hate her, be she the nearest in blood."

"Men don't malign each other, as a rule," replied Mary; "it is only women that can give the deepest stabs. Your sex have great charity for ours; ours have none for any one. Your sister told me that you had held me up to ridicule at your family dinner-table."

Harry Morton stood thunderstruck. Now he remembered how he had amused the family and guests with an imaginary account, or rather description, of the spinster Samson, who had red locks, false teeth, a figure like a shingle, and a hand that would cover a ten-acre lot. Yes, he *had* said all this, and now it came back again to him, like the return of a boomerang, hitting him slap in the face.

He could for a moment say nothing, and stood like a guilty person, and Mary began to move on slowly, as if she was loath to leave a spot where she hoped to receive an explanation that would drive away all the mists of doubt. "There was but one cloud that hung over her happiness in this house," this was what Louise Morton had told her, and she did not know Louise well enough to perceive that what she said was truth, armed with a dagger that the arm of envy would plunge into her heart.

Harry Morton hesitated but a moment, and the shadow that obscured his brow cleared away like an April day after a shower.

"Stop!" he said, laying his hand gently on hers, "don't go and leave any doubts between us. I see a rift in the cloud, and the glorious sun is about to pour his light on this misunderstanding. Sit down on this mossy seat and let me tell you how it all was. There is a grain of truth in what Louise told you, as there may be an atom of rust in a whole field of wheat, or a tiny speck of cloud in a summer sky, which the first breath of wind scatters away. Sit down and I will tell you all, without reservation."

She sat down and looked at him with her earnest, trusting eyes, hoping that all doubts would be removed when he had spoken.

"My mother," he said, "had long desired to obtain for my sisters a companion—one who had mixed somewhat with the world and could help to form their minds and eradicate some of the les-

sons of an early education. They had been pampered and and what was left undone as regards Louise, the finishing was put on at Madame Fancet's academy. My mother could not get many of her friends, but could not hear of such an one as would set her heart on. At last she determined to advertise. You would be amused if you could have seen the odd-looking persons who answered the advertisements—the merest caricatures of women whose vanity had led them to believe they were ordained by heaven. The very person Mrs. Morton was in search of. When the last advertisement was answered by yourself, the girls all declared it was going to be another unamiable, unacceptable old spinster. The last one that offered, who happened to be a Miss Belinda from Passamaquoddy. She had a frontlet of red hair, she wore blue goggles to hide her eyes. She had lost a parrot on her palate, she had false teeth, and a hand like the claw of an alligator. This was the description they gave me of her."

The merest ripple of a smile passed over Mary's lips; it was like a leaf stirred by the smallest breeze, or like the swell of some distant tune heard in the very far distance—the echo of a sigh. It stole into his heart like balm of morning dew, bringing joy to his breast.

"My mother," he continued, "who leaves no courtesy unserved, requested me to go to the boat with the carriage and the expected companion to the house. The girls anticipated terrible results. The name Samson carried with it something so strong-minded that I felt a dread myself; but what can do that to a young man? I was so full of joy when, looking for the ogre that was to bring consternation to the Hawks' Nest, I met Miss Mary Gale, whom I had the honor to once to serve, and whose image had never been effaced from my mind."

"Please forget that name, sir," said Mary. "Remember it as a word of honor; your applying it to me might seriously compare me with another person. I ask it as a favor, and you need not care. There is any mystery about it that concerns anybody but the person who bears the name."

"Your request is law to me," he answered; "the name will never pass my lips again. But would that you could always remain Mary Gale. You can not tell the joy I felt when I saw your face once more, rosy in youth and health. It was like seeing again on the green oasis in the desert when all hopes of seeing anything but the desert had vanished. It was like seeing a b

gliding stream spring into existence in some dark morass, where the mephitic atmosphere had been destructive to life. It was like—well—like seeing you after expecting to see a Miss Belinda Oakum of Passamaquoddy; it was like gathering the pure snow-flower of the arctic regions when I expected to gather the deadly nightshade. I chuckled to myself to think what a lovely surprise I should have for the family when I produced you instead of the woman they expected. I determined to tell them nothing about you until you should burst upon them in all your youth and beauty. I merely told my mother to go and meet her fate, when the girls anxiously inquired what sort of person you were. I shook my head despondingly, and, looking up to heaven, said 'spinster' in a hollow voice. When asked the color of your hair, I said 'red'; your teeth, I said 'false'; and when you struck up that beautiful music on the piano, I said, 'Pretty good for a hand that would cover a ten-acre lot.' Then I burst out laughing and said, 'Go see for yourselves.' My sister Patch saw the mischief in my eyes at once, and not one person but knew and felt that the soul that could attune to such melody as that must have a face and figure to correspond. I stole away to enjoy the surprise which I knew awaited the family, and from the porch I looked through an opening in the blinds and saw the rapture of my dear mother when she first beheld you; I saw that you had won her heart at once. You seemed to wake some echo in her breast long since dead, and it brought a look of joy into my mother's soul, which was all that was wanting to make her beautiful.

"When my sister Angeline laid eyes upon you it reminded me of a picture I once saw of a young Indian princess upon whom the sight of the great ocean had burst for the first time, with its wild breakers lashing the shore. Angeline took you into her good and innocent heart at once. She saw in you the reflection of what she would one day be herself, and that young boy, who seems to possess instinct of a peculiar character, enabling him to detect at a glance the pure and perfect, clung to you as the clematis clings only to what is free from all that is poisonous or deleterious. My heaven was complete. I swam in a sea of delight, and no Elysian fields could equal in splendor those through which I strode to sing my joys where the brook and river met, murmuring their happiness at your advent. Am I forgiven now?"

She laid her hand in his and said: "I was never angry with you, only hurt; but the hurt's all gone, and life now runs as smooth

with me as the deep and gliding stream which goes ever on, to its wealth to distant shores."

He held her hand for a moment in a tight embrace, then gently withdrew her fingers, and with a blushing face said: "Go to the house; I see Angeline signaling us."

"Yes," he said, "let us go; and now life will flow along more pleasantly. I shall get something better than monosyllables from those lips, which seemed to have words for every one."

"You shall complain no more," she said, "and to-morrow I shall sing for you a song you will like, which I don't often sing to any one."

Here Patch joined them, and looked at each with her keener quiring eyes. She knew that something had taken place, and that it was something pleasant. Going up to Mary, she kissed her on the lips, and, turning around, kissed Harry, and then walked away with *Bene Trovato*.

"Come, Benny," she said, "we are *de trop*; two are enough, three are a nuisance. A dumb little rooster like you doesn't count."

Commander Conrad was so far convalescent that Louis went to visit him, in company with Miss Bane, in his room, and she took the first opportunity to do so. He rose to receive her as she entered, and on her approach took her hand and pressed his lips to it, in the old knightly gallantry, while he simply bowed to Miss Bane in rather a frigid manner.

In fact, that lady was heard to remark that "Captain Slings may be a great commander, but Mr. Slings is the Chester Curlew; he would never omit to kiss my hand if an opportunity offered. Her hand mightn't be as good at embroidery as Miss Louise's, but at pies, puddings, cakes, jellies, 'kickshaws' she'd give her six and beat her. That's the way with her," she said, "human nature is appreciated in this world. One spends her time in lolling about all day, making believe she is working embroidery, when all but the stems of a piece and two buds are filled in when it is bought, and she dawdles through the whole summer doing that badly, meantime screeching and playing on a piano and bringing all the spiders about the house, and, after that's done, employing all the servants in the house to fetch for her, and, after all her ogling, don't make much of a catch. I don't call a navy officer nothing," she said. "I've had to sew all the buttons on Commander Conrad's

and he must have an awful large big toe, for he's got a hole in every sock you can put your hand in. That's the way of the world, though, to go gallivanting around after such as that, when they had better be looking after females as can make pies and things. I can beat any one in this county making apple-dumpings, and put an apple inside the pastry without showing the seam. That's what I call a useful housewife—what would just suit a naval officer, who, Mr. Slings informs me, is always damning their buttons, no doubt because they're sewed on so bad. And then, when they comes home of nights, to find these young creatures screeching away on the piano *una voky poky far!* to some feller that he ought to kick out of the house, although he ought never to have let him get in there—well, it beats me! Though I have been in this family twenty years, I never see such goin's on, and I don't know any more of 'em now than I did twenty years ago; and now here's an opportunity for me to better my condition, for I don't believe Slings cares a mop for a woman that's been married seven times any more than I'd care for Blotch if he had seven wives, though, for the matter of that, he might as well have married a dozen as this poor creature that took him in, for I'm sure Blotch got into the wrong house the night he should a married me, and woke up in the morning in the arms of another woman; and he must have been very much astonished when he see that carrotty-red head, red nose, freckled-face thing of a woman peering out from a sixpenny night-cap without ever a frill on it, instead of my face—the face he loved. But he always was a cool, patient man, who took things quietly; and if his wife that is now—the one that cheated me out of him—was to drop down dead to-morrow, I don't think he'd take the trouble to write and let me know, he's so indifferent like; and between him and Slings, if Blotch was single, I don't know what I should do. It would likely be like the donkey between two bundles of hay—a likely story, to be sure, which I never believed, though donkeys is donkeys all the world over; and I don't know which is the most patient of the two—Blotch, who has waited so many long years and has never smiled since he was deceived into going into the wrong house to marry another woman when he was on his way to marry me, or Slings, equally faithful and persevering after a woman that has married her seventh or eighth husband. But he is just on the point of offering himself to me, and I can afford to do without his master's offering to kiss my hand, and *he'll* get enough of kissing that other one's, for if ever there was a—”

"O Miss Bane, Miss Bane!" shouted the cook, "you've gone and put red pepper in the custard, and it's all ruined, it is, and we've got no more milk without sending a mile into the country, and milk's twelve and a half cents a quart—and—"

"Saints take the custard!" exclaimed Miss Bane, "and drat the men. I never gets 'em in my thoughts without some evil happening, so I'll just give up thinking of Blotch and Slings both, or else my character for puddings will be lost."

This was all after Miss Bane went out, as Miss Louise asked her if it was not time to go and attend to the dessert. Louise stayed long enough to arrange with the commander a ride in the pony phaeton the next day, and then took her leave, the commander kissing her hand in the same knightly manner when she went out, her trembling fingers slightly compressing his at the time she withdrew.

On parting from Harry Morton, Mary proceeded to her room, her heart full to overflowing. Life seemed so different now from what it was the day before; she did not know why.

There was the same beautiful landscape spread out before her, the sun, moon, and stars did not shine a bit brighter, and every one had treated her kindly heretofore except Louise Morton, yet to-day her blood seemed to be bounding through her veins, and she felt as if she could fly. Every now and then she would look down at her right hand; the impression seemed to be left that some one was tightly squeezing it. Harry, in the hurry of the moment, must have pressed her hand more ardently than was proper on short acquaintance—yet what was the length of that acquaintance? It was just five days since she set foot in Morton villa.

What a number of incidents had happened to the sweet girl since she left home! What a whirl she had been in *for her*! While to others the country was perhaps a trifle dull, and they had at times to rack their brains for amusements, to Mary it was a gala day from the time she got up in the morning until she went to bed at night.

She had written her mother two letters since she came to Hawks' Roost—one simply announcing her arrival, and the other giving her first impressions and informing her mother she thought she would be happy there. But now, since her interview with Harry Morton, everything looked so beautiful to her that she had to sit down and pour out her feelings to her mother, as will appear in the following letter:

"HAWKS' ROOST, October 10, 1880.

"MY OWN DARLING MAMMA : I have written to you twice since I came here, and received your own sweet letter in return. Oh ! how I miss my sweetest of all mammas, and I know she misses me, and I am with you in my dreams all night !

"O mamma ! it is *so* beautiful here, and I am so happy—that is, as happy as I can be anywhere away from you—and I only wish we had a nice little cottage up here, overlooking the beautiful Hudson, where we could never be separated for a single minute, for, though these good people are kind to me beyond anything I ever imagined, yet I miss my own darling mamma's kisses when I go to bed. Not that I do not get affectionate kisses here, for Angeline and *Bene Trovato* give me fifty a day at least.

"You don't know who they are, but I can't tell you all at once ; I must tell you a little at a time. Oh ! mamma dear, Mrs. Morton is the sweetest lady I ever met with, and treats me as if I were a relative, instead of being an utter stranger, and she sits and looks at me when she thinks I am not observing her, and tears come into her eyes. She always kisses me good-night, and yet about one thing she is always formal. She always calls me Miss Samson, and says it pains her to hear the name of Mary, and will not allow it to be spoken in her presence. Her own name is beautiful—Eleanor Morton—and she is as beautiful as her name ; not so much beauty of feature as in her lovely expression, which reminds me at times of you. She has my own mamma's large, dark eyes, but her head is covered with the most beautiful chestnut-colored hair, without a silver streak in it, while my own darling's hair is as white and beautiful as snow, and yet she is not much younger than you. She has a daughter a year or two younger than I am—but oh ! so beautiful ! and I want her to love me, but she is not loving like Angeline, who has the face of an angel. They are all beautiful. The Mortons have a son who belongs to the navy. He will soon join his ship and go far away to sea.

"There are two gentlemen here who treat me very kindly, and I feel as if I were with my elder brothers when with them. One is Mr. Deville, a romantic, sad-looking man, and the other is a Mr. Vere Saye, who is an English gentleman. They both call me their little sister. Is it not strange they should have taken a fancy to me ? Mr. Vere Saye, I think, cares for Miss Flossy Carrolton, a beautiful young lady who lives in a cottage close by with her father, and poor Mr. Deville is, so Angeline tells me, pining for Miss Louise

Morton, who doesn't care for him, but cares for Commander (of the Curlew. O mamma, how dreadful it must be to c some one with all your heart and know that he doesn't care fo and yet have to go about with a smiling face !

"There is another young gentleman here, Mr. George Angeline calls him Prince Gold Hair, because he is so bea He reminds you all the time of the princes in the fairy tales too, is in love with Miss Louise, but she won't look at him Angeline says he will die with a broken heart. Is not that ful, my sweet mamma ? and he is so young too. Oh ! how I hate to die with a broken heart !

"Everything is so lovely here that life passes like a dream. lovely villa, overlooking the noble Hudson and perched up rocks almost like a lordly castle by the sea, with the love noble trees about it, and the gorgeous and golden-tinted floating above, should be the realization of a poet's dream. to sit by moonlight on the great rocks which overlook the H with the moon in full sailing overhead, while the thin mist settling upon the river, giving it the appearance of a bur mirror, is too beautiful ! The sails of the graceful vessels, a drift down the river, are reflected in the water as in a huge lo glass, and the songs of the sailors keep time to the huge oars, are put out on each side to keep the vessels from drifting on rocks or into the eddies. The storms of ocean, with their t winds and waves, never reach this sequestered spot, and on S the chorus of the village bells falls upon the senses with a sol that one never feels in a city. There is a freshness in the a that inspires one to deeds of daring. I never felt it anywh fore.

"With Angeline, *Bene Trovato*, and the two dogs—oh ! tell you all about the two dogs in my next letter : they did great service once—I climb up and down inaccessible clif stand on rocks that overhang the steamers as they pass b people on the decks looking like pygmies, while the shadows old oaks are reflected away out into the deep, deep river, in we also see reflected our forms and faces.

"O mamma ! what would I not give to have you sittin by my side, with Angeline, *Bene Trovato*, and the dogs, for I go anywhere without them. It would be heaven.

"And then I think of my own darling at night, when the pation of the day is over, coming home and missing her little

who never slept away from her side before in her life ; and these fresh airs would put some roses in my sweet mamma's cheeks, too, and she needs some in her sweet, pale face.

"And now, my darling mamma, I write to say that I have determined not to come home the first Sunday, for I could not get back until late Monday, and I will have a great deal to do that day ; so adieu, my sweetest, and believe me,

"Your own affectionate

"MARY."

Singular to relate, Mary made very little mention of Harry Morton in this letter, considering that everything looked so happy to her, and that her feelings were evidently tinged with the roseate hues of the clouds, river, air, and woods she had just been describing.

When she had finished her letter she kissed it, sealed it, and then, putting it in the mail-box, sat down to the piano to give vent to her feelings. She forgot that she was not in a house of her own ; she was thinking she was a thousand miles away. She forgot there was any one near to listen to her, and thought not that the woods and river would catch the echoes of her voice and carry them from rock to rock, from grove to grove, where the tiny warblers would listen in amazement to the harmonious sounds that had invaded their domain.

She ran her fingers over the piano, making the keys sound like the warbling of a bird. It was in splendid tune. Then she played a beautiful waltz, that seemed to vibrate among the rocks and make the leaves dance upon the trees.

The gardener, working at his post, raised his head and listened, nor could he continue until the music ceased. He wiped the perspiration from his brow and shook his head. "Bedad !" said he, "that beats all I've heard in the way of music since I came to these parts."

Then she played from the opera of "Sonnambula," and played from ear all through its most difficult parts, forgetting that the rich music reached other ears than hers, and that the sounds of the piano were floating away into the halls and chambers of the large house as well as into the woods and grottoes of the surrounding property. The plowman stopped his team to listen to what to him were heavenly sounds ; the servants in the halls all stopped their talk and clattering of pans to hear this divine melody. The

kingfisher, just about to make his dive for some incautious prey, cocked his ear and listened to the melody while his prey came, and all Nature seemed to suspend her functions while the strains filled the surrounding air.

Then she sang. She forgot there were ears within ten feet of her. She was thinking perhaps it might disturb her mother's work; "but no," she said to herself, "she loves to hear me sing sometimes." She was transported back to John Street, to her neat little parlor, where the plain-looking but excellent piano, standing in the corner, the notes of which had scarcely ever mingled with the outside air; and if the cartman on his rumbling wheels caught part of a refrain, he did not know whether it was the newsboy's shrill notes proclaiming the latest news.

When she opened her mouth the sounds that came from her throat were like those of some sweet flute played by a master hand. She would fill the room, the halls, the house, with her sweet strains until every human being was astir.

Angeline (with *Bene Trovato* in tow) had crept in timidly and crouched down with her little companion behind an armchair. Patch with her mouth half open, and the boy with his eyes wide with a wonder he had never felt before, while the two girls sat down behind her, attentively listening, yet never making a sound. The song she sung was an old one of Moore's, and though out of fashion, but the words touched the heart and thrilled the senses. It was a favorite song with Mary and her mother, and was as follows:

"When amidst the gay I meet
That beaming smile of thine,
Though still on me it beams most sweet,
I scarce can call it mine.
Oh! but when to me alone
Those secret tears you show,
Then I'll call those tears my own,
And claim them as they flow.

"The frozen snow on Jura's steep
Can shine with many a beam,
And yet in chains of coldness sleep,
How light soe'er it seem.
Oh! but when some sudden ray
Whose light as fire appears,
Then, then the snow dissolves away,
And, melting, turns to tears.

"Then still, dear girl, with bright looks bless
The gay, the cold, the free.
Give smiles to those who love you less,
But oh! keep tears for me."

Mary had just finished the last words, while the gentlest of sighs passed her lips, when she felt a hand laid upon her shoulder. She looked up, and beheld Louise Morton standing by her. The latter's eyes were lustrous with emotion, her lips were half open, showing her beautiful teeth, indicating that she had been intently listening, and there was an air of astonishment about her not easily described.

"Can you teach me to sing and play like that?" she said, pressing her hand heavily on Mary's shoulder. "If you can, I will spend a lifetime in repaying you with wealth untold."

Mary jumped up from the piano, blushing to the roots of her hair. "I forgot," she said, "that I could be heard, although I might have known it. I hope I didn't disturb you."

"Girl," said Louise, "dismiss that affectation. If I had your art I would not care whom I disturbed; the whole world should hear me. Tell me at once if you can teach me to sing and play as you do, and to paint like that piece you left in my mother's room. I am your equal in beauty," she said, drawing herself up proudly. "I would be, if I could, your superior in all else."

Poor Mary was so confused at this manner of addressing her that she could not speak, especially as it was the first time Miss Morton had noticed her since the night of the party, when she made so uncalled-for an attack on her.

"Can you," said Louise, imperiously, "teach me your art? I will reward you tenfold. I have talents, I can learn, and an object will stimulate me."

"It is my duty, Miss Morton, to give you all the aid I can; but I think you may overrate my abilities, and you may play and sing better than I can. I should love to do anything that would give you pleasure."

"A truce to your compliments," said Louise. "I want no one's love but one, and I want your accomplishments to secure that. I could no more paint a copy even of that picture of 'Expectation' of yours than I could fly, and I much doubt if the master's touch has not had a good deal to do with it."

Mary felt hurt at these remarks, and the tears flew to her eyes. "You do not doubt my word, Miss Morton?" she said, with a

quivering voice. "No hand but mine has ever touched ture."

"So much the better," replied the other; "the more you will be to teach me. As to my singing and playing, fool. I know it is as inferior to yours as day is to night, or singing of a crow is to a nightingale."

"You underrate yourself," said Mary; "if I heard you, give you, likely, a better account of your voice."

"Pshaw!" replied Louise, "don't lose time in idle words you and will you impart your art to me? My life depends on and my hopes of happiness."

"I will devote my whole time to you," said Mary, "if I do, and give my whole heart to such instruction as I can impart."

"That's what I want—acts, not soft speeches. I get enough that from the men. Women can not conceal their ignorance from each other, and that part of me I intend to lay bare before you. I have no doubt your womanly intuition will find out all that I say, and now remember, if you want me to be your friend, give me your voice and transfer the activity of your fingers." With this she sailed out of the room in her imperious manner.

Mary sat for a moment in a reverie. "Why can not I said, "gain this young girl's love? I want all this family me."

She felt a pair of soft arms around her neck and Angelina kissed her cheek, while *Bene Trovato* had hold of her hand and was kissing her taper fingers. The two dogs, not to be outdone, held each their heads on her lap and were looking up with their eyes, to be recognized.

Mary's heart was full. "What would I have more?" she claimed; then, hearing a sound, she looked around and saw Patch looking in at the different windows, and Patch said: "Come, gentlemen and ladies, and see the great humming-bird. It comes louder than a steam-engine and fly faster than a cannon-ball. You shan't run away, Mary Samson; these gentlemen and ladies have taken tickets, and must hear you sing."

Then all the gentlemen and ladies came in; Harry asked for the same song, and Mary sat down without any affectation and played it. She would have played and sung all day for ever if that asked her, only Mrs. Morton said, "You will kill them among you," and kissed Mary on the cheek, saying, "You wonder! Now go, all of you, and get ready for lunch."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE STORE IN WEST STREET.

It has been some time since we have said anything of Allan Dare and the chief of police. While our other friends have been enjoying themselves in the country, these two have apparently been devoting themselves to reorganizing the police of the city of New York, which was now placed in a comparatively efficient condition. There were few burglaries committed, and those only of minor consideration.

When the news of the Eton robbery came to the chief's ears, he was considerably annoyed, and at once went to the rooms of Allan Dare, where he found him, as usual, quietly seated smoking a cigar, as if the world were going smoothly with him.

"Halloo, Dare!" said the chief, "have you heard of the great robbery of Eton & Co. ? Why, you are taking it as quietly as if nothing had happened."

"And yet," replied Dare, "I was the first man there after the robbery was perpetrated. I know all about it. It is evidently a put-up job on Eton. He has been boasting that he would defy all the burglars in New York to make an entrance into his strong-box, an iron safe with two doors inclosed in a granite wall, which also has a strong iron door with four different kinds of keys. The doors close with a spring, and can, it is supposed, be opened only by a key of a certain construction. I closed all the doors, and then opened them in half an hour with an adjustable key."

"An adjustable key! What in the devil's name is that?"

"A key that would unlock the gates of the lower regions if necessary," replied Dare.

"Dare," said the chief, "I believe you are the devil himself, and I don't know but what I am endangering my soul by keeping up my intercourse with you."

"I'm a good devil, nevertheless, for you, for I think I have pretty effectually put an end to the imps that infested New York. They have been driven to the river. This robbery of Eton has put me in possession of facts that will soon bring some more of these fellows to my net. I think the money of Eton will be finally returned; but if it is not, the old fool will deserve to lose it for his boasting. It was among a party of friends that he bragged of the strength of

his vault, and he took a lot of fellows there to look at it, threw his doors open before prying sharp eyes, and disclosed his wealth and his secrets. Do you remember a supper, in consequence of a wager he made, which caused such a sensation in New York? It was given at the Hôtel d'Or, and cost a thousand dollars. Of course, it was all talked about, and I don't go about and keep my ears closed against this kind of tittle-tattle. It is a rule with me to make a note of every incident that may bear upon anything in my line of business, no matter how remote, and it bears good fruit."

"I see," said the chief, "that you are not in a communicative mood."

"I have a good deal to do, your honor, between this and to-morrow evening, and my boys are waiting to get their instructions, so I must ask you to wait for another time to receive full particulars."

"Well, good-morning, Dare. Good luck to you." And the chief departed.

As soon as he had gone, Allan Dare touched a knob in the wall, when Belette and Tormenteur entered.

"Your report first, Belette."

"I will make it as short as possible, sir," said Belette. "Since your last order on the first of October I have never rested an hour. I have watched Hans Hammel, *alias* Jacob Moses, like a cat, and he's the sharpest old cat I ever met with. The boy, with all his sharpness, was no match for him. When Hans Hammel went out of his cook-shop and left the boy in, he took the precaution to put a thin film of wax on the key-hole, no thicker than a sheet of paper. The boy didn't go out for several nights, but when he did go, the knob of the key disturbed the wax, and Hans Hammel, who examined the key-hole before he put the key in it, discovered that some one had been there. He was, fortunately, a little worse for liquor. As soon as the boy could communicate with me and tell me where his boozing-ken was, I shadowed him myself, and have never lost sight of him since that time. I shadowed him for six nights at the place in West Street. I took employment with the keeper of the drinking-den for night-work, at low wages, from eight to eleven, which were his busy hours, and then I served Hans Hammel, with whom I talked Dutch, and got into his good graces.

"On the last night I saw him, when he rose to go, leave a red wafer stuck to the settee. I examined it closely and found the number 966 on it, which is the number of the store in West Street, kept by Jacob Moses. In a few minutes a sailor came in, sat down

on Hans Hammel's seat, and while I went for the beer, keeping my eye on him, he stooped down and read the number. He drank his ale quickly and went out. I was after him and shadowed him to Wharf 28, North River, where he got into a small boat and pulled off. I waited there until one o'clock, and was on the point of going to Jacob Moses's store to reconnoiter, when the sound of muffled oars close by struck my ear. I threw myself behind a post on the ground. Then one of the boat's crew jumped out—there were four in the boat—and threw the light of a dark lantern over the pier. 'All right,' he said, in a low voice, 'pass up the chinkers, and be careful the rattlers don't squeak.' Then they passed up four large bags, each one as much as a man could carry, and, shouldering them, they staggered off for the store of Jacob Moses.

"When they got there one of them unlocked the door, and they passed in as quick as a wink. I did not go to the door, for they might have had some one on the outside watching. They did not examine the pier as they came back, but jumped into the boat, and I crawled up to the edge of the dock and heard them say, 'Only one more load to-night; the rest to-morrow night.'

"I waited an hour nearly before they appeared again. This time they had a large boat and eight men. It was raining at the time, and they slipped about and swore a good deal. They seemed to have been drinking, and were not so careful as before. I know now the nights on which they will land their cargo, for Hans Hammel always leaves a wafer with the number on it. There is to be a landing to-night, I am sure, for it will be a rainy night, and that will suit their purposes."

"All right!" said Dare, "your road is clear. Shadow the man who goes up to the den in West Street when he leaves for the wharf, and, as soon as you see him shove off, go to the store of Jacob Moses, unlock the door carefully, and go in."

"But how am I to get in without a key?" asked Belette.

"What a foolish question!" replied Allan Dare, and he gave him a large iron key, with a label on it marked "Jacob Moses." "It unlocks the store-door; it has the number on it. That key is your sailing orders. Get inside once, and then make your calculations. If you find any one there, which I am sure will not be the case, you must secure him. Arm yourself to meet eight men. One man that shoots as you do is a match for eight men when he has four good double-barreled pistols, loaded with three balls each. Let me know everything that goes on; everything that is said; everything

that is done ; and don't leave there until they have got away. You know the habits of those rascals. Now I leave the rest to you. *Bon voyage!*" And Belette departed.

"Now, Tormenteur," said Dare, "let me see if you know the name of Ferret. Tell me what you have done."

"After receiving your letter, sir, informing me that you were satisfied that the burglars, having been driven out of the city, had transferred their operations to the river and the towns along the river, and giving me general directions how to proceed, I went to a boat-builder and ordered a Whitehall boat to be built in fact of the lightest material, to be twenty-two feet long, and with a proportionate beam, three feet four inches. She was painted a lead-color inside and out, so that she could not be seen at a distance of a few feet off. She had three oars, a sail made of lead-colored cloth, a small breaker for water, a kedge weighing eight pounds, and a line for cable. She had a rudder. I paid for her when she was built, in all, one hundred and twelve dollars and seventy-one cents. I bought a boiled ham, ten pounds of ship's biscuit, ten pounds of roast beef, six pounds of butter in a can, some pepper and salt, costing five dollars and seven cents. I put in the boat ten blankets, a small boat-compass, a breaker of water, my snapper, two pairs of double-barreled pistols, my big knife, and my jacket, and then I put my little terrier *mouche*, weighing seven pounds seven ounces, in my pocket."

"Why," said Dare, "you must have been preparing for the North Pole."

"One never knows, sir, where he may go when he starts out to hunt that kind of vermin," replied Tormenteur. "I started up on the morning of the sixth of October, and noticed all the vessels I saw on the way coming up or going down. The vessels I saw carried never more than three men besides the cook. Many of them had a dog, showing they were afraid of thieves. I did not suspect until I got to Poughkeepsie, where I saw a schooner lying just below the town, that lay at anchor, with a fair wind blowing down the river. Every vessel put out except her. She had two masts, one a four-oared twenty-four-foot boat, and the other a small boat. She had five men on deck, and I saw another look up to see if I was there and dodge down again. That was suspicious. She had a new stern, freshly painted, nailed on. I sailed close to her and observed her closely, so that I should know her again. She was painted with three streaks—white, blue, and red."

"When it was dark I dropped down on her and anchored fifty yards ahead of her, where I could see her, but where the people on her could not see me. I soon found out that there were more than five men on board; from the talk, I should judge there were at least fifteen. I listened attentively. I heard an order given, and I heard the answer, 'Aye, aye, sir! hin a minute, sir!' 'That,' I said, 'is an old English man-o'-war's man.' Then I veered out my line until I was within ten feet of her and could hear every word said. They had no light up, as the law required; they did not want any one to know that a vessel was anchored there. I heard a voice give an order for the boat to be ready at eleven o'clock. 'We have four miles to travel; get the bags and tools ready!'

"I knew then that I was on the right track. They talked low, and I could not hear much more. So I pulled ahead to my anchor by the line, and waited. At eleven the boat was manned and put off for shore, with eight or ten persons in her. I did not follow; it would have been of no use, so I remained. At one o'clock, when everything was quiet on board, I dropped down under the bowsprit and secured the stem of the boat to the bobstay near the cutwater. I slipped out quietly and got on board. There was no one on deck, but I could see six men in the cabin playing cards and drinking. The watch on deck was asleep. I crawled up to the cabin-door and looked in. I shall know all those men again, wherever I see them. I then got into my boat again and hauled ahead.

"The boat did not return until four o'clock in the morning. It was still dark. A light was called for, and I could hear them say the coxswain was shot in the side. Then they hoisted out several bags. They rattled against the side like silver. I heard one man say, 'We cracked three cribs—good ones at that. Two thousand in cash.' That was enough for me. I pulled in shore so that they would not see me at daylight. Then I heard the clink! clink! of the windlass, and I said, 'They are going to move, of course,' and I pulled nearer them. I heard the creaking of blocks, and the sails going up, yet I couldn't tell what direction she was going until I saw the side-lights put out, when I found that she was bound up the river.

"There was a five-knot breeze blowing. I put up my sail and followed her, and found that I could skim along faster than she could, and I kept on ahead of her. When I came to Catskill she was about four miles astern of me. I hauled up my boat among the

rocks on the shore and covered her with the long grass, and I waited. She sailed by and anchored four miles above C She had but three men on deck as she passed, had her f mast down, and had changed her paint. I found as she v that she had also changed her name. No doubt she had over her streaks, and took it off and put it on at pleasure.

"As soon as it was dark I took my station ahead of he fore, and at eleven o'clock the boat was lowered and went shore. I followed the sound of the oars, and, when they la landed a hundred yards above them. They hauled their l and soon disappeared up the hill. I crawled up to where t was. It was the four-oared boat, but they left no boat-keep

"I heard nothing all that night nor until half after five on the next, when I saw them come tumbling down the l very excited manner. There were only three men carrying a who appeared to be dead. They were bleeding, and their torn off their backs. I heard them say, 'Only to think of fo being whipped by one man and two damned dogs! And th of it was to lose the boy; the boss will give us hell!'

"I was within twenty feet of them while they were talk swearing like mad. I could have captured the whole of th I heard them say they had lost their arms. Then they pu to the schooner, and at dark I took my station ahead of he At eleven the boat put off for shore. I followed and took of observation. A cart arrived at the top of the hill, and the unloaded it with great celerity and carried the material boat. The boat then put off for the schooner. I followe schooner got under way and headed down stream. I ma and followed her to New York, hiding along the shore whe necessary to avoid being seen. The schooner anchored la at eight o'clock near Jersey City, and is there now—"

"And," said Allan Dare, "landed her plunder the sam between the hours of one and two, at Jacob Moses's store Street. Now, I must pay Jacob Moses a visit. Do you c at three o'clock to-morrow afternoon and get further orders many men can you raise—men that you can depend upon to a fight with these fellows, for I must wind up this schoon ness in short order? They have robbed three banks from down, over thirty private houses, and ten or fifteen vessel river, having valuable cargoes, and none of the plunder has recovered."

"I have," said Tormenteur, "the ten good men you gave me as sub-detectives, whom I am instructing in their business. No man is more than twenty-five years old. They are all powerful men, know the use of pistol, club, and knife, and are afraid of nothing. English Charley can raise fifteen of the best men in New York. Belette has four devils who, with himself, are worth any ten men."

"Very well," said Allan Dare, "you and your ten men are detailed to board the schooner to-morrow night after the boat has left her to carry the plunder on shore, and at about the time the pirates are in Jacob Moses's store. You will lie just out of sight of the schooner, with your force divided into two boats. The signal of attack will be a white and red lamp hoisted on the flag-pole at Wharf 13. Belette will be stowed away in the store. He will be there to-night and observe what he has to contend with, and find out how to dispose of his forces. I will give orders to him later. See that you make no mistake. Now get the wagon and prepare to drive me where I tell you. Take a pair of hand-irons with you, and go armed. Be active."

"Yes, sir," said Tormenteur. In ten minutes he returned, prepared for whatever might occur. He stopped within four or five houses of Allan Dare's, opposite an apothecary's shop, and was soon joined by the Rev. Mr. Raymond, who seemed so old and stiff that he could hardly get into the wagon.

"Drive to Jacob Moses's store," said the reverend gentleman, "and stop four doors below. After I go in drive up close to the door."

Tormenteur drove to the appointed place. The reverend gentleman got out, with apparent difficulty, and looked about him as if he was not quite at home in his calculations, and, seeing Jacob Moses's store open, he walked in. Jacob Moses was sitting on a high chair behind the counter, whence he could see out of the door far across the North River. His view took in a schooner with her foretopmast down and three men on deck. A very powerful binocular glass lay near him, which he used from time to time.

When the Rev. Mr. Raymond appeared in the doorway, the old Jew jumped from his seat with surprise. He was not accustomed to see that kind of customer enter his store. "Mine Got!" he exclaimed, "vot's dat? How vos you now, sir, and vos you vant? Coom in—ef you please."

"I want to see Jacob Moses," said the reverend gentleman, in a quivering voice, and leaning on his cane for support.

"Ah! you wants ter shee Yacob Moses? Vell, I must tell yer first yer petter put a hantle ter hish name, mishter; dot's der dicket for soups here. Sheckendly, I tells yer he'sh nod in."

"I beg your pardon," said the reverend gentleman, "he is not only in, but I am talking to him now."

"Yer petter shay I'm a dampt liar at once," said Moses, "unt get dose mouths of yourn proke mit mine hant."

"I hope you would not be so discourteous as that," said the reverend gentleman, "when I come in all politeness merely to obtain some information from you."

"Ah!" said Jacob, "dot's anodder ding. Yer wants infermation, eh? Vell, how mush yer villing ter pay for id? dot's der question. I bays for all der infermation I gets, unt der worlt baya. Dot's der rule mit human nadure, eh, mi ole gogalorum? Vot yer dink of dose proposition? How vos yer now?"

"Of course," replied the reverend, bowing, "I am willing to pay a reasonable sum for the information wanted, but I am quite satisfied that you will give it to me for nothing before I go away."

"Ter deffel yer do!" exclaimed Jacob. "Dose ish not der dickets for soups in dish place. No bay, no infermation. Dose ish my brinciple, ant mine dime ish wort dwenty tollars an hour; you now shpend of dose dimes just twendy minutes."

"I think not," was the reply; "only nineteen," at the same time hauling out a handsome gold repeater and making it strike; "but I agree to your terms. First and foremost, I am the president of the Society of the Destitute, to find places for the unemployed. I am told you are rich and charitable, and I want to ask you if you will give employment to a deserving young man who is out of work and who is a good accountant."

"Mine Got! tosh yer dake me fer a damt vool? Vell, dot peets ter teffle! No, py Got! no! Yacob Moses ish needer rish nor sharitable. Ish as mush ash he kin do ter keeb souls ant poddys tergedder. Iv dot's all yer god ter shay, petter shud ub shop."

"I'm sorry," said the reverend, approaching nearer, "but the lad I speak of is a relative of one Moses Grafft, whom I'm told you know."

At the sound of this name Jacob Moses jumped up two feet from the chair on which he was sitting, his mouth wide open, his hair standing on end, the color all gone from his face, and his eyes starting out of his head. He trembled from head to foot.

"Are you unwell?" asked the reverend gentleman.

"Who in hell tole you dot name?" said Jacob, now foaming at the mouth with rage. "Vot yer vos, ant vot yer vant? Yer dinks I'm a dampt fool, dosh yer? Der yer vant me ter preak yer chaw mit mine vist ef yer coom here mit yer dampt lies?"

"Quietly, air!" said the reverend gentleman; "don't get excited. Let me shut the door so that the people in the street won't hear your abusive language to a reverend gentleman like myself." With this he went and shut the door.

Jacob's eyes gleamed with a look of pleasure when the door was shut. Some diabolical idea seemed to enter his mind, and the ferocity of a tiger shone in every lineament of his countenance.

"Yea, shud him," said Jacob, "shud him; put loog oud yer nod drespassin' on mine bremlises; mens somedimes geds nogged in ter het fer less und dose tings."

"I am sure you would do nothing so discourteous," said the reverend gentleman, "and I will now show you my authority for calling upon you. You will recognize this letter of introduction, no doubt," and he went close up to him and held within a foot of his eyes a gold snuff-box, on seeing which Jacob Moses turned blue and shook worse than ever.

It was, however, only for a moment that he lost his presence of mind. Putting his hand quickly under the counter, he grasped a horse-pistol he had concealed there, but at the same moment the strong hand of the reverend gentleman seized him by his long hair and brought his ugly nose in contact with the counter with such force that the blood flew in all directions. The pistol went off in the air, and the ball lodged in the opposite wall.

Jacob Moses began to yell, "Mein Gott, I'm gilt! he's a murtherin' me! vot ter teffle I do to pe so dreated?" but, before he could be heard outside, the reverend gentleman hauled him over the counter as if he had been a bag of feathers and stuffed a handkerchief in his mouth, and, taking some small stuff out of his pocket, tied his hands and feet, meantime leaning his whole weight on Jacob's body until his eyes were protruding from the sockets.

Then the reverend gentleman went to the door and gave a low whistle, which reached the ears intended, and Tormenteur stepped in and closed the door behind him.

"Lock it!" said the reverend gentleman, and the click of the key was heard, at which sound the face of Jacob presented the appearance of the most abject terror.

"Now, Tormenteur," said the reverend, "take his gag out and let us hear him talk; he will tell us all we want to know."

The gag was taken out and Jacob began to howl. "I vill dell yer nodding," he yelled. "I vill tie first! I vill dake ter law uv yer!" But the gag was put in again, and the strong hand of Tormenteur held it there in anything but a tender manner.

"Put a *tourniquet* on his wrist," said the reverend gentleman; and Tormenteur, taking the instrument out of his pocket, applied it. "Give him number two," said the reverend.

Tormenteur screwed up the tourniquet the requisite number of times, when Jacob squirmed like an eel on the end of the line.

"Now take out the gag," said the reverend gentleman, "and see what he will say."

"I vill nod dalk," said Jacob, "yer dampt volf mit sheep's clothing! I've hed dose pefore, ant dey neffer make Yacob Moses dalk."

"Moses Grafft, you mean," said the reverend gentleman. At that name Jacob gave a groan and fell back pale with rage.

"Put in the gag," said the reverend, "and a tourniquet on each ankle."

At this announcement Jacob's face was the picture of fear, but he made no sign. Tormenteur then screwed up the two last tourniquets to the desired pitch, and it was very evident, from the contortions of Jacob's face, limbs, and body, that he was suffering dreadful agonies.

"Take out the gag," said the reverend gentleman, coolly; "he will talk now."

The gag was taken out and Jacob, gasping, cried, "Oh, mein Gott! dake dose dampt dings ov ov me; I vill dalk ash yer please. I'm tying py inches. Oh, mein Gott! hav mershy ont me!"

The tourniquets were taken off, and Jacob breathed again free of pain.

"Vot hev I tun ter yer dot yer dread me so? Vot vos yer anyhow? Who tole yer dot name of Moses Grafft? Vot yer vant? Yer done proke mine ankles mit your dampt foolin'. Oh! mershy! don't to dose dings no more. I shall dalk so mush as yer please."

"That's all right, Jacob," said the reverend gentleman. "We will deal easily with you as you deal truthfully with us. Now I'm a man of business, and won't keep you waiting."

"Only to dink," said Jacob, "I, like a dampt fool, toog yer fur an olt vool ov er track spreater, an tought yer vos too veek ter

standt up mitout yer stig, und yer tuk ant hantlet me as if I'd peen a papy."

"Yes," said the reverend gentleman, "I always do that way when people are unreasonable; and it is nothing to what I can do."

"Vell, I mush dalk to shafe mine life," said Jacob. "Vot vill yer I shall shay? Vot yer vant ter know?"

"Moses Grafft," said the reverend gentleman—at this name Jacob groaned—"in 1812 you robbed a gentleman living in Bowling Green, and were convicted by this snuff-box"—showing it to him—"and sent to the penitentiary for ten years. You escaped three months after you were sentenced, and got out of the country in a vessel bound to Cuba, where you remained two years, engaged in the most despicable occupations. Then you joined a gang of house-breakers in New York, having been sent away from Havana by the Spanish authorities. You were engaged in the following robberies from 1814 to 1815, viz.: One house in Park Place, No. 760. One jewelry-shop in Broadway, corner of Maiden Lane. The New York Bank was robbed the same year; you were engaged in that; I have all the proof. You committed a street robbery in company with three others at about the same time, and you struck a blow that maimed a man for life. Then you fell in with a man who was so much your superior that you have gone under his directions ever since."

"Who ish dot vot givsh me directions?" asked Jacob, looking wild.

"'The Boss,'" said the reverend gentleman; "do you know who that is?"

Jacob fell over and gave a groan. "Oh! mein Gott! it ish all up mid us. I tole em dey'd proke ter hets mit der dampst police. Oh! mein Gott! vot a nople sercierty der vos, all proke ter pieces!"

"You have been an actor in all the schemes of this noble society; you have been the receptacle of all the stolen goods that have disappeared from New York."

"Who tole you all dese liesh?" said Jacob. "I'm a mere shild in dose pizness."

"You kept the restaurant known as Hans Hammel's retreat, and keep it now."

"Vell, vot of dot?" he said. "Dese ish a free guntry, unt a free beeples, ant I keeps an honesd resderant."

"Yes," said the reverend gentleman, "where the Boss and all

the members of your noble society of thieves meet to concoct their deviltry."

"Who tole yer dose damp't liesh can't brove it," said Jacob, though his voice sounded very faint.

"Do you remember a small boy who took service with you, washed your dishes, and slept in a barrel, while you fed him on bones and scraps of hard bread?"

"Vell, vot of dot? He vas a goot poy, unt lifs at mine chop; dot is mein pizness. I bay him vell; he serfs me petter ash goot."

"He will serve you no more," said the reverend gentleman. "He was my agent. He saw everything you did; he watched you from his barrel as a cat would a rat; he tracked you when you went out at midnight, and there is not a haunt of yours to which that boy did not track you."

At this announcement Jacob groaned, and then burst into tears, blubbering like an overgrown boy. "Oh! mine Gott! dish vill kills me; dose ish ter vorst uv all, dot poy vot I loff so, dot I dort vos so drue ter me, dot kuld vash more tishes in a minude dan four vomans, unt who vant no closhe, no shoes, unt only vun cake shope a munth, ant five shents at der ent uv ter munth—oh! mine Gott! dish is tretful ingratitute. Ah, now I rememper how dose wax ofer der key-hole vas proken vonce, eh? it vas dose poy? Nol"

"Exactly so," said the reverend gentleman. "We have had twenty detectives on you ever since you have been engaged with the Boss, and we know everything you have done for six years. As for the boy, he is out of your reach. You will never see him again."

"Ah!" said Jacob, "I lofe dat poy as never I lofe any poy before, he vos so goot unt so sheep. Who vill vash mine tishes now?"

"No one," said the reverend gentleman; "your shop will be closed. We know all we wanted to know about it. We know every man who went into it. We know all the secrets about it."

"Ant who tole you all dose tings?" said Jacob; "unt I s'pose he tole of der segret glosset, unt ter turn-taple, unt der room uv justiz, unt ter pizness-pox, mit nails, unt all dot? Vot a poy! vot a poy! vot a beebble! unt I tort him so goot!"

"Yes, he told us all; but if you will be reasonable we will deal gently with you. We want you as State's evidence, to convict the rest of the party."

"Uv gourse," said Jacob, "dot ish mine duties; iv dose beebbles dosh not haf der shense ter keeb oud uv der gluches uv der law, den dese ish mein duties to dell der hole truff."

"That's right, Jacob ; you may yet live to be a respectable member of society. But let me tell you one thing : if you trifle with me in any way I will put the screws to you so that you will wish that you had never been born. Now show me the hatch down which your friends put their plunder last night."

"Unt, mein Gott !" said Jacob, "you know dot too ?"

"We know everything. If you wish, we will show you how to open it."

"No ! no !" said Jacob, "I will be a goot citishen. I will maintain ter law. I will give yer dose invermashuns." He rose up sorely and stiffly and pointed out a spring near the counter. "Dot ish ter blace !"

"How many cargoes have you down there now ?" asked the reverend gentleman.

"Ah !" said Jacob, "only ter Boss, he knows dot. I no more pokes mein nosh der den I flyesh ; all dot's ter Boss's broberdy ; vot he knowish he knowish 'bout dose tings. Ven he say, 'Sells dose tings,' dose tings is sole. Ven he say do so, den effery potty do so ; dot's all vot I shall dell you 'bout dose tings, unt der oner uv Yacob Moses !"

"Now I will be plain with you," said the reverend gentleman ; "I want you merely as State's evidence. I don't care a snap to see you hang. There are so many counts against you that you would have to serve a life-time. No one but myself has the evidence. I have your acts for every month since you returned from Cuba. No one but myself and the boy could appear against you."

"Ah ! dot goot poy," said Jacob ; "he prokes mein hart. I done care for lif, dot's a fac'."

"When I break up this gang I will place you in safety, where you can spend your old age repenting of your crimes."

"Oh ! no, goot sir," said Jacob, "not grimes, bud inderskreshuns. I vos let away, unt I kuldn't help dose tings ; bud I have a shild. Vot vill pecom uv her if Yacob Moses go away unt rebent ? Vot vill she to ter lif ? Who vill dake care of mein shild ?"

"Well," said the reverend gentleman, "I will see to that. I am glad to find in all your wickedness one touch of nature. As you deal with me so I will deal with you. At the first act of treachery I will hand you over to the law. You may fly to the farthest end of the earth, but I will find you. You can take your choice to hang, or give up your confederates and go free."

"Sef peservashun ish der fust law mid nadure," said Jacob.

"If I vould keep mein het on mein shoulder, I mush keeb frents mit der hankmans. If I mush keeb frents mit der shark, I mush do vot der pilod-fishes do—dot's vot I mush do!"

"Now," said the reverend gentleman, "you must go with me. Go quietly; I will take care of these premises."

"Dese bremishes ish nod mein," said Jacob. "Der dakes care ov derself."

"Until I learn to have confidence in you, you must submit to a little restraint for a few days. Now supply me with a box of each kind of wafers you use in your pursuit."

"Oh! mein Gott!" said Jacob, "you knows dot alsho; vot don't yer knows?" and he pointed to his desk. "Ah! dot goot leedle poy, he sawed dose wafer vonce ven I drop a pox on ter der floor. Vell, vell, vot a worlt! unt vot a beebles! unt he vos a goot leedle poy, eh? Yes, I vill go quiet, bud be coot unt kint ter Yacob. I'm an olt mans an only indishkreshuns!"

"We will go, then," said the reverend gentleman. His arms and legs being released, Jacob arose, very sore and shaky and very much unnerved. Tormenteur helped him out and into the wagon. The reverend gentleman locked the door and put the key in his pocket. Then they drove to Allan Dare's house and got out. Jacob was led up-stairs to a back room, with a window looking into the back yard. The window was heavily grated, the inner door consisting of a heavy iron grating; this was the only sign of a prison. The room was neatly furnished, and contained a good bed.

"There, Jacob, make yourself comfortable; there are cigars and wine, and I will send you a good supper."

"Der fust dime dat I shall sleebe mitout er halder mid mein necks fur den year; but, mein Gott! vot vill der mens do ven dey miss Yacob Moses?"

"I'll attend to that, Jacob; so good-night."

When the door closed on him, Jacob listened until the footsteps were lost to hearing. Then he got up and cautiously began to reconnoiter. There was a tinder-box on the mantel, and steel and flint, and he lit the candle. Then he began to peer cautiously all around the room, and examined the grating to the windows.

"Ah! dots vot I gall er solit vinder-vrame; nod a vile effer makes a marks on dot," he said, talking to himself. Then he examined the door. "Mein Gott! mein Gott!" he said, "dish doors mush be mate to keeb ter teffel fast. No hobes! no hobes! no hobes! I'm a brishoner, unt no mishtake!"

"Yes, Jacob," said a voice from a hole in the wall overhead; "and if you were to get out, the dog would tear you to pieces."

"Oh, mein Gott!" exclaimed Jacob, "I'm losht! I'm losht! Vot er damp't fool I vos ven I knowt dot mans knowt efferydings I doose! bud I vos only inderskretcheus unt kurous to know how ter confint ter teffel ven ter got him"—and he threw himself upon the bed and groaned aloud. He knew now that there was an eye on him, sleeping or waking, and that it would be no use for him to do otherwise than he was told, if he did not want to hang. At five o'clock, dinner, or supper, as he chose to call it, was taken in to him by Tormenteur, and he was left to his own reflections until next morning.

At three o'clock Belette called on Allan Dare, according to instructions.

"I have been in the store of Jacob Moses," said Allan Dare, "and I have learned all I want to know. But as you will have to conduct the expedition to-morrow night, go to-night and see where to put your forces. The plunder is all under the floor, which has no apparent opening, but near the middle of the counter you will find a steel spring; touch that, and the hatch will open. Examine the hold, to see if there is any outlet, and, if there is none, to-morrow night, when they are all down there, shut the hatch down on them. It may save bloodshed. If they don't all go below, slam the hatch down all the same, and secure those above. English Charley will give you ten of his best men to hide in the store until the time for action comes. These, with your four, who will be the ones to make the rush, will be enough to make a complete capture. Let each man take two pairs of double-barreled pistols, club, and knife. English Charley will guard the outside with six men. If there is any outlet to the upper store, block it up to-night. Jacob is a prisoner, and won't disturb you. No wafers will be posted to-night; the pirates won't move. To-morrow night you must post a wafer in the same place at Jacob's boozing-den. One thing more: the moment you make your attack, jump to the door, lock it, and take out the key. Use clubs as much as possible, and pistols only as a last resort. Have a van to take away the prisoners, and appoint one man to attend to the signal lights. Don't fail. I must leave town. Keep all the prisoners secured in double irons on board the schooner until my return. Don't even let the chief of police know the whole result, but merely report the capture of dock-thieves. I will be back the morning after the capture, if possible. Now you know all."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

LOVERS' VOWS.

THE morning after the events we have been narrating occurred, Louise Morton had arranged to drive Commander Conrad out in the pony phaeton.

The commander was recovering rapidly of his wound, but there still remained fever, with symptoms of great weariness and nausea. Dr. Bones, the surgeon, could not understand them. There was an irritability of the stomach, and the temperature of the body remained higher than was desirable. "Pray God," he said, "that pyæmia does not exist." He thought that fresh air would probably do good, and he approved of the ride.

Chic drove to the door at the appointed time, and met there Mr. Vere Saye, who was standing with a beautifully silver-mounted whip in his hand, with the initials "L. M." on the handle in large, deep-cut letters.

Commander Conrad came out, leaning on George May's arm, who was helping him tenderly, while Miss Morton was following, carrying a small basket containing refreshments, cordials, etc., in case the invalid should become languid.

As Louise approached, Vere Saye bowed to her and placed the whip in her hand. "There!" said he, "your outfit is now complete. No lady in New York has a handsomer turn-out."

She thanked him kindly, and he handed her into the phaeton, placed the reins in her hands, and told her how to hold them to the best advantage. He shook hands with Commander Conrad and then helped him in by the side of the young lady.

The phaeton drove off, Miss Morton handling the reins with much grace and dexterity, considering that she had driven so little. She turned the heads of the horses into the first road they met leading into the country. "I will show you," said she, "the famous Catskill Mountains, of which you have no doubt read. Washington Irving has made these parts famous by his story of Rip Van Winkle."

"Yes," he replied, "I have read it; but, Miss Morton, there is a story I would tell you that is far more interesting to me. You can not tell how I have longed for this moment, that I might thank you for all your kind sympathy and attention. I would

take a dozen such wounds to be tended but one hour by you. I have been drifting all my life through the currents of the restless ocean without an object, without an aim in life, and never thought to reach some sheltered cove where I could be safe from the storms of wild emotion that beset men in my profession."

Louise's heart beat rapidly as he commenced in this strain, and she had a premonition of what was coming. Just at this moment she turned an angle of the road, and there, directly in her path, she beheld Edgar Lane sauntering slowly along with his head down and his hands behind him, evidently absorbed in his own reflections, which seemed to be of no very pleasant kind.

The carriage was close upon him before he heard it, but he turned round before it reached him, and, looking up, he showed a haggard, pale face, and deep-sunken, large eyes, proclaiming a heart full of misery and despair.

As the phaeton passed, he faced it with a flushed countenance, and indignation flashing from his formerly subdued eyes. Looking at the two as if he would annihilate them, he did not bow, nor take any further notice of them. Louise Morton wished she could have struck him with the pole, and crushed his body with hoofs and wheels until all the breath was out of it.

"Who is that peculiar-looking young man?" asked the commander. "I have seen him wandering about your grounds several times, and in a moody way. His mind seems to be unsettled."

"No," replied Louise, "he is an insolent dependent of my father's, who has so pampered and petted him that he forgets the respect due to his superiors."

"But what is his name, and what his station? He strikes me as particularly rude, and, if I may use the word, defiant."

"His name," said Louise, "is Edgar Lane. He is my father's secretary; but dismiss him from your thoughts; the words you were speaking when we met him are much more interesting to me."

"Are you then, indeed, interested in what I was saying? I was then in the realms of enchantment, and would ere this have poured out my soul to you had it not been for yon rude churl. I hope it will not be my doom to wrestle with the tides of fate, and, just when I am about to reach the promised land, to be thrown back upon the rushing surf, floating amid the waste and desolate ocean of life without a hope to cheer me on. You have touched my heart, Miss Morton, as no woman ever has. I have known you but ten days, but that has seemed an eternity to me. It may be

presumption in me to address you on such a subject in so short a time, and in your father's absence, yet I can not wait ; I must hear my doom. My love for you is consuming my very soul, and in my feverish dreams of late I have seen nothing but you, always fleeing from me, always escaping my love, and a river of blood between us. That I imagine was the effect of fever—but tell me, you yourself, what is to be my fate ?”

She turned her full dark eyes upon him, filled with love and passion, and put her left hand in his, while she drove the ponies with the other. “I have loved you,” she murmured, “from the first moment I knew you. I never dreamed what love was till then ; and when you were wounded, and I feared you might die, I thought my heart would break. Will this content you ?”

“Oh ! ten thousand times content me,” exclaimed Conrad. “This is a gleam of sunshine such as seldom enters man's heart. Youth, beauty, and love, such as no romance could picture—all mine when I felt as if I stood on a precipice, ready to be cast into the waters, or on to rocks below. Oh ! thank you a thousand times for the new life you have put into me ! I bring you a love as pure as that of a virgin. I never saw a woman before that could raise a sentiment in me. We will mingle our lives like the waters of two silver streams fresh from the mountain-rocks. You are too young ever to have known the feeling of love.”

“I ?” said Louise, blushing. “I never dreamed of the feeling until I saw you. How could I ?” and she told this lie as coolly as if it was a common event. Then the happiness that she gained at such peril to herself rushed to her face, and her eyes glowed with a softened light, which made her look more than beautiful. She cut the horses with a wild delight, until they fairly flew along the highway. The mile-stones passed almost as quick as thought. The ponies, excited at the too frequent touch of the whip, were tearing along like mad, and the commander had to remind her that horses had feelings, and should be driven carefully.

“Oh !” she replied, “Mr. Vere Saye told me I could not hurt them, that they were as ‘tough as whitleather,’ and that I might drive them as fast as I liked. Ah ! I am so happy that I feel as if I wanted to fly through the air and not travel like a tortoise. The blood is coursing through my veins like a mountain-torrent. Let me be happy, dear Ware, to the top of my bent.”

The ponies seemed to have partaken of her spirit as she lashed them again and again, and they now had got into a full gallop, the

trot no longer satisfying her impatience. They got the bits between their teeth, and they now fairly flew along the road, paying their compliments to the foot-passengers by covering them with the whirling dust thrown up by hoofs and wheels.

"You'll kill your horses, darling," said Conrad; "hold them in if you can, or let me help you. You'll kill yourself, too, if you don't look out, for, if we should happen to meet a team coming this way, you or it would be wrecked to a certainty."

"Oh! not yet," she said; "let me enjoy my happiness while it lasts. Who knows how soon it may come to an end? Life's joys are very fleeting." And she snapped her sharp-cutting whip into her ponies' flanks, and on they flew. She was cruel by nature. It never struck her that the ponies were suffering acutely, physically, though their energy and spirit carried them on. What did she care? She had secured Conrad's love, and damned the life of another; and when she thought of this and the final penalty she might have to pay, she gave more stinging cuts to the horses.

Conrad looked on admiringly, because he loved courage even in a woman. He thought he had never dreamed of anything so beautiful as this girl as she drove so madly, leaning forward with her eyes earnestly fixed before her, her lips partly opened, and joy in every look. It seemed as if she was driving to reach a goal, had distanced all competitors, and that the prize was full in sight.

"My brave girl," he said at last, laying his hands upon the reins, "I must exercise my authority to save your life and that of the horses."

"Oh! not yet," she exclaimed, "not yet. Ten minutes more of this happiness; let me enjoy my prime of love. This is love's spring to me; don't trample on its flowers; do not nip its buds with frosty speculations. Let me rejoice in the fullness of my first delight. Everything looks so new and fresh to me to-day; the buds and all look so new, and the blue heavens smile with the melting tenderness of love. See how bright the sun is, how clear and sweet the air as it comes perfumed with the smell of mountain-pines. Oh! stop me not yet; the goal is in sight where I would lead my love to rest. Think not I'll drive against that silver wall of the Catskill Mountains and injure you; I love you too much for that. Let me but reach the goal I seek, where the fairies meet by moonlight, and the west winds blow the softest zephyrs laden with the sweetest breath of heaven, and then the deluge, for what I care! Wait! wait! we turn in here. Don't grasp my hand so nervously.

See that giant oak ahead—that trickling stream from the steep wall of mountain ! There ! help me now ; your strength and mine will stop these wayward horses, or else they'll pass the Elysian Fields and plunge us into Tartarus."

Conrad seized the reins in his strong hands, and, though weak from his wound, the horses soon found they had a master at the reins. The hard driving began to tell upon their muscles, and, missing the sharp wounds made in their flanks by the cruel lash, they stopped, quivering and panting, beneath the wide-spreading branches of an oak, whose top seemed almost to reach the overhanging edge of a mountain-cliff.

"See there !" cried Louise, with sparkling eyes. "Does not this repay us ? Where in the world is there such a spot for love's trysting-place ? At our feet a winding river flows like a small streak of silver thread, while the mountain thrusts its pines into the clouds, which seem to lie at anchor over its nodding crest." In her glee she jumped from the phaeton and clapped her hands.

"This is beautiful, indeed," said Conrad ; "but oh ! Louise, you are the goddess of the scene. Yet, my love, in our transports over this beauteous spot let us not be forgetful of the duty we owe to these dumb beasts, whom God has not imbued with an imagination to enjoy this lovely spot. See how they tremble, and see how the foam stands on their fretted flanks. This western breeze, so cool and pleasant to us, would soon be death to them."

He took the horse-covers, which the stableman had thrown thoughtfully into the seat-box, and put them carefully over the horses' smoking backs ; then he loosened the check-reins which kept their handsome heads high. They lowered them near the ground, all their style gone, their eyes dim, and looking as if they would never reach their homes again.

"You are a hard driver, my sweet one," he said ; "see how melancholy the poor horses look."

"It was my anxiety to show you this spot. I feared it would fly away, and I not live to sit here with you."

He took her by the hand, and, drawing her to him, pressed upon her willing lips his first sweet kiss of love. There was no coyness there, no maiden modesty gazing with timid glances into her lover's eye, no look of startled dove as the shadow of its mate with cooing tenderness comes floating o'er the quiet nook where she sits to receive her lover with innocent bashfulness. No, there was none of that sweet innocence, the reflection of early May, which men so

love in those they have won, and where the blushes of childhood yet linger on the cheek of later June. There was passion in her eyes and longing on her voluptuous lips, and the heaving of her breast showed the tumultuous feelings of her heart.

But she pulled herself away from his embraces when he began to look with eager love into her soft, voluptuous eyes. She ran to the phaeton and took out the rug, and laid it on the bright green grass. Then she took out several shawls and laid them on the rug. The pillow, intended to be placed behind Conrad to make him comfortable, she stood against the body of the old oak, while the soft corduroy cushions were arranged for seats.

Then the basket of refreshments was placed upon the rug and a wide napkin spread. A bottle of champagne *frappé*, partly melted but still icy cool, was produced; a small bottle of sherry next; then cordials, followed by a cold *poulet*, a glass case of *paté de foie gras*, tiny slices of tongue, two small silver plates and golden knives, and some beautiful small, white loaves of bread.

While Louise was arranging these things Conrad devoured her with his eyes, and asked himself a hundred times, "Can this beautiful being be mine in heart and soul? Am I to have and to hold her for the rest of my life?"

When she had finished her pleasant task she rose, flushed and beautiful. "There, dear Ware," she said, "this is a feast fit for a king; and you shall be my king to-day—the only king I shall ever want in this life. Now, look at this beautiful spot, fit only for the abode of love. These wide-spreading branches, where the sun never intrudes, make our summer palace; this lovely grotto, with its silver spring, and the murmuring music from its trickling waters, give us the nectar of the gods; these vast fields, with their golden-hued trees, their crimson and golden grasses; these gay buttercups, and clumps of Virginia creepers, are our garden parterres; and these red-breasted robins, fattening upon the fall cedar-berries, the golden falcon sailing over our heads in quest of prey, the darting swallows skimming near our feet, and shivering blue-birds mourning the approach of winter, will be our subjects.

"Here we will reign all day, monarchs of all we survey. Our music shall be that of the soft wind as it sighs through the old oak-leaves, making sweeter melody than the *Æolian* harps; and, if that does not content you, I will sing you soft love-songs that will send you into heavenly slumbers. This is my prime of love; I intend to be happy to-day, if never more. Does this content you?"

she said, going up to him and placing her hand upon his shoulder. He drew her to him, and she went willingly into his arms, and he covered her face, lips, and eyes with his kisses.

"O heaven-born girl!" he exclaimed, looking at her with rapture. "No king on earth had ever such a queen, or ever reigned over such a realm as this, whose subjects all worship the queen with love, where the plants and flowers all bow down at her approach and let their incense arise in her honor to the skies, and where the king only lives in her love, which is the light of his existence."

She still lay in his arms, looking up at him with her gazelle-like, passionate eyes, and seemed to wish to linger there for ever. "Ah!" she said, "how I have dreamed of this hour, and it is mine at last!" He clasped her to his bosom wildly, and then she tore herself away.

"Here," she said, "sit here against the tree, and this soft pillow will rest you. If the fairies don't come to serve us, I will do it myself. Here is some iced champagne; it will cool your parched lips, and I will join you in a toast of love. Our hearts will respond to each other with sympathizing sighs. This champagne is life's oblivion; it weeds the mind of noxious vapors, and scares away the shadows that would enter into our souls, if we would let them. Let our glasses kiss and kiss again, and let angels breathe the spirit of love into these crystal fountains."

They drank together, and the refreshing beverage brought the color to Conrad's pale cheeks and the sparkle to his eye. "More, Louise," he cried; "this is the nectar made for drooping souls. Were I on a barren isle with you, and all was desolate around, these precious drops would make the arid sands look bright, the glassy sea look beautiful. More, Louise, and drink with me." They drank again, and closed the bumper with a loving kiss.

"Now my king must eat," said Louise; "it will not do, in your weak state, to drink without taking solid food. Here is a *poulet*, young and tender, here some tongue, and here a box of *paté*—take that which you like best." They sat and ate under the branches of that majestic oak, as if it was their palace and there was no other world than this.

The generous wine had made Conrad feel like a new man. When he first started out he felt worn and weary, but now all had changed. His spirits had all returned to him; he felt as if he had never been wounded, and the past was but a dream. His eloquence all came back to him, and he sat and talked to her in glowing lan-

guage of the time to come when he would convey her to his lordly home in the valley of Virginia, where a spacious mansion would receive her, and where slaves would bow down to her and worship her as queen ; how his grand old father and his graceful mother would receive her with the courtesy of king and queen, and how his beautiful sisters would delight to be her hand-maidens. He told her of that lovely climate, where the heat of summer never troubled, and where the frosts of winter were tempered by the breath of May ; where the clematis bloomed nearly all the winter through, and where the Virginia creeper only lost its green in the first part of December, to put on its gorgeous winter livery of red.

He painted a pretty picture to her, to which she loved to listen, her full eyes drinking in every word he said, and each word engraved, as he uttered it, on her swelling heart. She crept closer to him and took his hand, twined her slender fingers around his muscular ones, as the tender vine clings to the hardy oak. His arm slid around her slender waist, and there they sat and talked until the glory of the day began to wane and sunny skies began to clothe themselves with a sober gladness, more akin to the feelings of love that burned in these two hearts.

They saw no change in earth or air ; they only saw the changes in each other's eyes, a lovelier spirit in the richness of the tinted trees, and the sun's declining rays lighting the autumn woods with richer dyes.

Again they drank to each other's lasting love in the sparkling champagne. The crystal water at their feet had no charm for them. The gentle winds were kissing the blushing leaves ; the feathered tribes, full of sweet warbling, were filling the woods with lays of love. All nature was attuned to gladness, while all around there was such glory in the scene that their hearts, subdued with passion, longed to linger amid these heavenly haunts.

She lay with her head upon his heart, forgetful there was anything else on earth but him ; and he, with her tempting lips so close to his own and her fragrant breath mingling with his, and caressing his glowing cheek, would often stoop and linger with passionate fervor on the tempting fruit till prudence told him it was time to go. And yet how hard to tear one's self away from such a heaven of bliss ! Her eyes were as soft as the dove's when cooing with her mate, her lips quivered with emotion, her arms were thrown around his neck, and she murmured, "O my king, how I love you ! Who knows but what a tornado may come to tear this all away ?"

One long, loving kiss he pressed upon her lips. "Come," he said, "we must go home now; the sun is descending in the western sky; it is getting late."

"Not yet!" she exclaimed, "not yet! This is my prime of love. Who knows what to-morrow will bring? and the birds which sing the birth of our love this eve may sing our requiem to-morrow. Oh! not yet, not yet!"

But he was more strong than she. "No," he said, "the falling shadows bid us to depart. Let us have nothing to regret for the hours of happiness we have spent under this noble tree. We will come again, and here with you, to make the minutes fly cheerily, I will soon regain my shattered health. We must drive the horses home carefully, or they will not recover from this day's work without some nursing."

"Oh!" said Louise, "if you wish it, I will walk them all the way, for then I shall be the longer with my king. I would not get home till midnight if I had my way."

"That would never do," he said. "I see I shall have to teach you prudence, Louise."

Had he not lost his head with blinding love he would have seen that here was no shrinking, blushing brooklet, running calmly on its way to the sea, feeling its course carefully amid the rocks and other obstructions, and shunning the kisses of the noonday sun, but a wild, impetuous torrent, that bounded through hills and valleys, carrying everything before it. He found it out later, to his cost.

The blankets were taken from the horses, the other articles placed within the vehicle, and they slowly started on their way home. The horses were stiff, and seemed scarcely able to drag their weary limbs along; but Louise did not care how slow they went, as long as she could sit beside her king and listen to him telling her of his love, and discoursing of that Southern home to where he longed so much to take her.

At length the horses' joints became more supple from use, and they went along more rapidly, but it was nearly dark as they approached the bend in the road where they had met Edgar Lane on their way out. They saw a figure standing on the bank at the side of the road, and Louise's heart bounded with fear. "What if it is he," she said to herself, "and he should shoot me? Well, I will die at the side of my king," and she whipped up the horses. As they passed they saw the figure of Edgar Lane looking at them with

a threatening countenance, as he stood with folded arms until they were out of sight.

"What a singular young man!" said the commander. "Do you think he has been there ever since we left? He must be wrong in his mind."

"No," said Louise, "he takes a morning and evening walk, and we happened to encounter him in both; but he is insolent, and papa shall know of his conduct. He is not worth thinking about."

When they arrived at the house, every one was anxious to know what had kept them, for a good deal of anxiety had been felt about them. Vere Saye was at the door when the phaeton drove up, and he stepped forward to help Louise out. As he took her hand and landed her on the ground he whispered, "Did the grotto pay, and bring you the happiness you anticipated?"

"Insolent!" she said, flashing her eyes at him, "you will not let me like you if I will. To-day I saw the trembling partridge hiding in the fern from the hawk—again I scent an enemy!" and she rushed past him into the house.

When she arrived at her *boudoir* she found Chic seated at her door, dressed in a suit of page's clothes—blue, trimmed with maroon velvet and silver bell-buttons—looking smaller than ever.

"What are you doing here?" she said, rather brusquely.

"Why, miss," he answered, "I belong to you, and no one else, and I am here to obey all your commands. It is my happiness to serve you, and you only."

"What a cute little thing you are, Chic!" she responded, the gloom passing from her countenance at hearing such a tiny thing talk in so manly a manner. "Will you be true to me, Chic, and do all I tell you?"

"I will die for you, miss, if you want me to," replied Chic.

"Well, then," said Louise, "jump up here on the back of this easy-chair, on a better level with my head, where I can talk to you without bawling."

Chic sprang up, as he was bidden, with the activity of a marmoset. He was a pretty boy, with rather an old-fashioned face, like a child that had stopped growing while age went on.

Louise looked at him closely. "Well," she said, "Chic, you are certainly the cunningest little monkey I ever saw. Can you keep a secret?"

"Oh, yes, lots of 'em, miss. The last young lady as I was in her employment told me lots."

"Chic," said Louise, "what would you say if I told you I was in love?"

"I know that allers by a young lady's looks," replied Chic.

"How is that possible?"

"Why, their eyes," said Chic, "are allers watching the parlor-door, or the garden-gate, or looking down the road; their mouth has a kissin' look about it, and they allers keeps on hand a short upper lip; and, no matter how straight their noses are, they allers has a leanin' to the right side. The men allers puts their right arm round the women's waist, and chuck up the chin for kissin' with the left hand. Then there is another sign. When a woman is in love she's leaky; she must tell somebody; she can no more hold it than a laying hen on a nest can hold on to her egg. If she can't find anything else to tell it to, she'll whisper it to the hay-stack. If the hay-stack won't listen to her, she'll announce it to the woods. I've seen all the trees barked with their lovers' names. I've seen yourn written on six garden-posts, and on four winder-panes with a diamond!"

"O Chic! Chic; I can't trust you; you are too sharp."

"And that is the very reason you won't trust a fool. The women all try to pump me; I never knew a one as didn't end by trusting me, and that's what you'll do."

"Now, tell me, Chic, what are your particular relations with the lady you serve."

"Perfect trust, miss," he replied. "I lounge about her room all day, I dress her hair, I carry her three-cornered notes, I tell her when a gentleman is getting in love with her; I know all the signs. I give her hints in dress, I tell her all the scandal. If there is a lady she doesn't like, I try and ruin her character for her. I tell her where to put her rouge and patches. If there's a man she doesn't like, I make it hot for him, and when she hasn't seen her lover for three or four days, she practices kissin' on me, so as not to forget how!"

"O Chic!" exclaimed Louise, "you are a jewel. Now tell me who I am in love with?"

"With your king," replied Chic.

Louise started. How could he possibly find out that she called Conrad that? she thought. "How did you find that out, Chic?"

"By examining of the gate-posts, the window-glass, and the soft rock overhangin' the river. You've cut it in the latter place with your penknife four times, and affixed the date."

"Chic," said Louise, "I will trust you. I must trust somebody, and I can no longer trust Patch ; she takes advantage of me."

"Trust no one but me, miss, and don't trust your 'king' even too far."

"Here, Chic," said Louise, who had seated herself at her desk, "take this note to my king." The note to Conrad was as follows :

"O my king ! whose slave I will be to eternity, will those happy hours ever come again ? This day has been my heaven of love ; sleep with me in your heart.
LOUISE."

She lighted a taper and sealed the note with a neat blue wax-seal, and her motto, "I live for you !" "Now let him get it before he sleeps, and I will dress for dinner."

Chic was off in an instant ; but he stopped down-stairs, removed the seal with a sharp penknife, read the note, and with a piece of mouth-glue replaced the seal again, so that no one could notice it. He delivered it in person, bowed, and vanished again to his mistress's room.

He found her sitting before her glass, with her beautiful hair down her back, her neck and shoulders bare, and her voluptuous bust just enough exposed to make her look more beautiful than ever.

"How dare you, Chic ?" she said, throwing a shawl over her neck. "Why didn't you knock ?"

"I never does, miss," he replied, saucily ; "that's one of my perkisits ; it's on such occasions as this as me and my mistress opens our hearts to each other. Perfect trust is my motto."

"How old are you, Chic ?"

"Only seven, miss, weigh thirty-two pounds, and am three feet two inches high."

"Pshaw ! you're nothing but a child after all," and she threw off her shawl that she might view her beauty in the glass. "Ah ! king, king," she murmured, "all that I am is yours !"

"Now, Miss Morton," said Chic, "if you please, I have one little request to make of you. I'm at your service all day and all night, except from 8 to 10 P. M. ; then I takes my exercise and expands my mind."

"What do you do then, Chic ?"

"I go to the Hawks' Throne every night at those hours, and I crawl up to the topmost branches where the nests are, and have been for four hundred years, and I watch them old monarchs how

they live. There they sit at night, the male and female sleeping on a limb each side of their nests, while the young ones are stowed away as snug as a bug in a rug. There they sit with one eye asleep, the other wide open, and woe be to anything that touches their young. Last night a large black-snake came creeping up the tree, his wicked eye gleaming like a diamond. He looked at me as he passed, wondering what I was and if I was worth eating; but I never go such journeys unless well armed, and when I pulled out my long knife he hauled off. I watched him go toward one of the nests, when five or six hawks darted from their post of observation, and, all seizing him together, they flew high into the air and let him fall, so that he was dashed to pieces. That's the kind o' government I like. It protects its inhabitants, and it has existed four hundred years. I bid you good-evening, Miss Morton," and, bowing grandly, Chic walked out.

"If that isn't the most supremely ridiculous child I ever laid eyes on," said Louise Morton to herself; "but isn't he bright? He's just the kind of confidant I like; he'll never betray me, and I must have some one to talk to. There's the dinner-bell, and I not ready."

When eight o'clock came, Chic took his little hat and cane and walked out of the house, in the opposite direction to the Hawks' Throne, and was soon lost in the darkness.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

TRIBULATIONS.

THE Dove Tavern was situated to the north of Morton villa, about three quarters of a mile. It was a quaint-looking little place, well situated for the purpose for which it was intended, and was kept with considerable care.

It was a long two-story house, with sharp slanting roof, to shed the snows in winter and the rains in summer. It had a wide porch, running the whole length of the house in front at both stories. There was a parlor, dining-room, and a small bar-room kept for the convenience of the guests only.

Mr. Vere Saye occupied two of the best rooms in the house, situated at the western end. He chose them because they looked out upon the country and the Catskill Mountains in one direction,

while by sitting on the porch he could see far down the Hudson and across into the eastern country, where the residences of the Livingstons, the Vanderdeckers, etc., loomed up in their great proportions. By going to his back room, which was his bedroom, he could see far up the Hudson through vistas in the trees, and with his powerful telescope could even plainly discern the faces of the people on the schooners going up and down the river, and, had he known any of them, could have recognized them. He could see up and down both roads leading along the banks of the river, could see the Morton villa, and even the platform erected on the lower limbs of the Hawks' Throne.

A general of an army desirous of obtaining the best position for military purposes could not have selected better.

At the west end of the house there had been originally planted, within a few feet of the tavern, a small sugar-maple tree, and as the tree had grown, the branches near the house, having no place to spread in that direction, struck out at the sides, giving the tree the appearance of having had all its branches lopped off on the side next the house. The view from the bedroom was almost obstructed by this tree, though a good view was had from the parlor.

Vere Saye loved, however, to sit in his bedroom in the evening, with the window up, looking out into the tree, though what he could see there that was interesting no one knew but himself.

He was seated at this window on the evening when Chic went to take his accustomed walk, and was deeply interested in "Paradise Lost," which he was reading by a pair of wax candles, when something came through the window and alighted on the floor. It might have been a cat, or an owl, or a chicken roosting on the tree, as far as it concerned Vere Saye, for he went on reading as if nothing had happened. He merely took out his watch, looked at it, and returned it again to his fob. He read on five minutes longer, when he shut up his book, laid it down, and, turning his chair, said, "Chic, how often have I told you that it is as great a fault to be ahead of time as it is to be behind time? You know how particular I am."

"I'm just up to time, sir," said Chic, "and though I'm in at the window, I haven't reported yet. I had to do it, sir, because, as I was a-standing out of sight ready to come up, I see a lean-looking thing, which I thought was the cat, hunting around, and then cautiously crawling up your tree. Says I, 'That's not a cat; we're

watched !' So I puts on my claws for climbin', an' with a hop, skip, an' jump, I was on his back. 'Scat ! mew ! squee ! show ! sphet !' I screeched in cat language as I plunged my claws into his scalp, his eyes, and face, and as I went over his shoulders I gave him a kick on top of the head with my iron heel, and he fell ; and, strange to say, I heard that cat exclaim in plain English, 'O Lord, I'm kilt !' We've been watched, sir."

"I know it, Chic ; but it's just what I wanted. Let them watch. I don't think that cat will come again."

"No, sir !" said Chic, "he'll be laid up a week. We can talk without fear of interruption."

"Well, Chic," said Vere Saye, "how do you like your mistress, and can you gain her confidence ?"

"Oh, yes," said he ; "we're as thick already as burglars, and I've already taken a three-cornered note to her king—'O king ! O king !' she said, 'I love but you !' She forgot I was there."

"Now, Chic, that woman has insulted me every day since I have been here, and I'm going to give her a lesson. You must find for me among her accumulations a bundle of letters from Edgar Lane. I know there is something between those two, and she shall not marry this Conrad if I can help it. She has evidently treated poor Lane badly. Before Conrad came here she was with him every opportunity she could get, and spent much of her time with him on the river in a boat. Since these officers came she has thrown him overboard, and the poor wretch is wandering around the country half demented. I feel sorry for him, and at the same time I want to pay her off for her insolence to me. Conrad is an honorable man, and thinks her an innocent girl ; but the moment he finds out how treacherous she is he will drop her."

"They're awfully in love, sir. She's got her hooks so far into him that she won't let go, neither will he."

"You mind what I say, Chic," repeated Vere Saye.

"Of course, sir," said Chic.

"At eleven o'clock to-night do you be at the Lamb Tavern. It is the exact counterpart of this house, having been planned after it. You will find a tree at the end of the house, situated just like this. It is opposite Deville's parlor and George May's bedroom. You must shadow those two men. I want to know their inmost thoughts. They are both in love with Louise Morton, and either of them would marry her. There are other things I want to know about those two men ; keep your ears open, and remember what

you hear. If you can, get a look into their trunks, and see what you find there ; do so, but be prudent ; don't misplace anything, and take a list of things."

"Yes, sir," said Chic, "it shall be done as you wish."

"When is your next birthday, Chic ? You have been a good boy, and I shall give you something handsome on that day."

"I shall be sixteen on the first of November."

"You don't look half of that," said Vere Saye. "I never saw such a midget, and yet you are handsome, Chic, well proportioned, and talk well."

"I forgot to tell you, sir," interrupted Chic, "that she kissed me yesterday—strawberries and cream, sir !"

"Who kissed you ?" exclaimed Vere Saye, starting.

"Why, the lady you are in love with—Miss Morton," said Chic, venturing to guess in hopes of finding the cause of his master's apparent jealousy.

"Who told you I was in love with her ?" said Vere Saye, regarding him keenly.

"Why," replied Chic, "they say 'hate is akin to love,' and you evidently hate her just now."

"Chic," said his master, "never try to pry into my purposes. God has made you small to provide for you. Your place pays you well because you are a midget. Don't lose it by prying into motives that I don't want you to know anything about ; report to me to-morrow night at twelve o'clock ; now go."

Chic was out of the window in a twinkling, and disappeared without the rustle of a leaf being heard.

Next day the sun rose clear. There was a freshness in the air calculated to make the blood circulate and give one a keen relish for breakfast.

Commander Conrad had passed a restless night, and the morning found him feverish. His friend May, who had remained in his room from twelve o'clock till daylight, felt uneasy about his condition. He thought that Conrad had done a foolish thing in riding so far with Miss Morton ; but there was an air of happiness about him, and a lightness in his eye, that caused May to think something very agreeable had happened to him.

Conrad lay on the sofa until twelve o'clock, and, when May came in at that time, said to him : "Come, my friend, give me my drops ; I must sleep if I do not wish to wear myself out. This has been a happy day for me, old fellow, and I will let you into my joy.

I am happier than a king, for I have won that beautiful girl's heart and hand."

May was pouring out the drops at the time, and started, while a third more than the requisite dose, unobserved by him, ran into the wine-glass.

"I congratulate you," he said, "if the prospect of marriage is to be considered a subject of congratulation—for it's all a lottery."

"Yes, my friend," replied Conrad, "and I have drawn the grand prize."

"Then go to sleep," said May, "and I will watch you until you are quiet."

Conrad was soon in a sound slumber, smiles flitting around his lips. "Ah!" muttered May, "it was too much happiness for *me* to expect; but there is no knowing whether Louise will marry him. She may change her mind at the sight of some new face."

When Conrad awoke at seven o'clock he was pale and feverish. May assisted him to dress, and said he would go for the doctor. He had no sooner disappeared than Conrad threw open the window, and the air was so invigorating that he determined to take a stroll in the garden. He turned into a side-path, bordered by an arbor-vitæ hedge, and, as he did so, suddenly encountered Edgar Lane, with pale, sunken cheek, and gloomy brow.

Lane raised his head as Conrad approached and glared furiously at him. Conrad stepped aside to avoid a collision, and politely raised his hat. Lane looked so haggard and pitiful that Conrad could not help saying, "Good-morning, Mr. Lane; I hope I see you well, sir!"

"Who told you my name was Lane?" said the other, fiercely; "and by what right do you dare address me, who have never been introduced to you? Do you miserable aristocrats think you can crush the souls out of us clods of the earth, deprive us of our rights and all that we hold dear, and then honor us with your d—d patronizing airs?"

Conrad was taken aback, and scarcely knew what to say. Yet it was not his nature to recoil at any attack. "I don't understand, sir," said he, quietly, "how, when one gentleman salutes another politely, it can be construed into a cause of offense."

"Because," said Lane, "a well-bred gentleman never attempts to force his acquaintance upon another when it is not wanted. If a stranger were to stop you on the street and address you as you have just done me, pray what would your aristocracy think of it?"

"It's a different thing, sir," said Conrad. "You know who I am and I know who you are, and it is only anticipating a little an introduction that can not long be deferred."

"Never will I be introduced to you," exclaimed Lane, vehemently. "I know no more of you than others know of you here—that you are a beggarly naval officer in pursuit of prize-money."

Conrad's face flushed. "How dare you, sir?" he exclaimed; "you are discourteous."

"That is exactly what I meant to be," replied Lane; "you gave me the opportunity by addressing me, and I have taken advantage of it to show you that we clods of the earth don't appreciate the acquaintance of the salt of the earth. Walk on, sir, and don't disturb me further."

"No," said Conrad, "this matter can not end here. You have insulted me without cause, and you must explain and apologize."

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted the other, "explain to you? Yes," he continued, coming close to Conrad, "I could explain with a vengeance, but will bide my time. If you are insulted, pocket the affront, and don't hereafter attempt to patronize better men than yourself. There's your road and there's mine. Walk on!"

Conrad felt very weak on account of his illness. Before him stood an active young man, who had grossly insulted him. Conrad had kept his temper until forbearance had ceased to be a virtue, and he fairly trembled with excitement. Still he hesitated, when Lane put the finishing touch to the matter by the stinging remark,

"What! does one of our country's heroes tremble before a civilian? How quickly you would run at the approach of the enemy!"

Conrad's eyes flashed and his blood boiled. He raised his cane as if to strike Edgar, when the latter, quickly seizing it, brought it down on Conrad's head, felling him to the earth, and then walked away.

When May returned to the room and missed Conrad, he went with the doctor to the garden to look for the patient. They turned into the path just as Edgar Lane delivered his blow, and saw Conrad fall. The latter came to almost immediately, for the strength of the blow had been expended on his hat, his hurt in consequence being trifling. But the humiliation was none the less. Conrad collected himself immediately.

"Don't mention this, gentlemen, I beg of you," he said. "It was a mistake, and all my fault. A silly affair altogether," he said,

lightly; but his stern countenance and compressed lips showed that his spirit was not appeased.

"A foul thing to do to a sick man," said George May. "I'll punish that fellow within an inch of his life."

"Oh, no, you must not," said Conrad. "The sick man would have struck him had he not wrenched the cane out of his hand. The man is certainly insane. Leave me to settle with him in the future, and I beg of you, May, not to allude to the matter again."

"What!" said May, "do you propose to let the blackguard's blow go unavenged? If you will let me, I will cowhide the flesh off his bones, for the wretch knew you were ill and helpless."

"Thank you for your friendly feeling," said Conrad, "but you may rest assured that none of my blood will ever rest quiet under an insult. Vengeance will come at the proper time, but nothing must happen to mar the peace of this family, to whom we are all under obligations. I shall consider it a favor if nothing more is said about the affair."

They walked on. May could see that Conrad was suffering from the humiliation, and did everything in his power to make him forget it.

This was the day on which Mr. Morton was expected to return, and the carriage was sent for him at five o'clock.

Mrs. Morton, who was not very well, had lain down to await the arrival of her husband, while the ladies and gentlemen amused themselves in various ways. Some of the ladies, particularly Mrs. Eton and Flossy, were fond of billiards, and passed the morning in the billiard-room.

Patch, Mary, *Bene Trovato*, and the dogs spent the morning under the old oak, where Mary no longer said simply "yes" and "no," but talked constantly with Harry, and laughed, and wondered how she could be so happy away from her dear mother. Patch soon managed to get *Bene Trovato* and the dogs off into the woods to look for nuts, and no one ever knew what passed between the two that were left under the old oak—except the royal family of fish-hawks, which, seated on a limb, looked knowingly down on the lovers, now and then flying to the river for a fish to divide among their young ones, who made a terrible ado among the top-most branches.

Harry lay at Mary's feet, looking up into her beautiful eyes, while she sang sweet songs, or sketched his features on a visiting-card. He called her Mary and she called him Harry. He wore

one of her ribbons next his heart, and she wore his seal ring on her finger, and proposed to work his name on some handkerchiefs in her own golden hair. They had come to the conclusion that this is the most beautiful earth that could be imagined.

Harry told her how changed that tree would be if he should come back and find her place vacant—that she was the sunshine of the scene. The golden-tinted clouds that sailed overhead, like ships from India freighted with myrrh and frankincense, would seem like the veriest old hay-stacks if she were away, and memory would brighten up the visions of those times like the sun shining from behind a cloud, tinting its edges with his golden light, etc.

“You have taught me,” he said, “the blessing of life. I have been in my alphabet until I saw you. I never knew how to enjoy nature until you were at my side to echo back my thoughts, or to frame new ones from your expansive mind. With you at my side, Mary, days are but dim shadows of the past—the airy vapor that the breath leaves upon a mirror. Into my life perhaps some storms will come, but what shall I care for them if you are there, Mary, to stand by my side, to know that you will be the sunshine that makes the sharpest gust seem but an April shower! Have you a place in your dear heart for me, Mary?”

“Yes,” she said, “and I have ever had since first I knew you. I did not know what all this new existence meant, but now I know, since you have spoken my own very thoughts,” and she laid her beautiful hand in his, this time to be his for ever.

How little she thought, when she laid it there in sign of amity, that the feelings she had then were but the embers of love burning upon the altar of friendship, and that the merest zephyr would fan it into a blaze! With what rapid but quiet footsteps love had entered her heart! She could hardly realize that she had told a man she loved him—she who had never dreamed before of any other love but that she bore for her own dear mother.

She blushed to think she had been so easily won, but she was so pure and truthful there could be no guile in her. Truth always went hand in hand with her; there was a light within her heart that could never be dimmed by the miserable sin of coquetry.

How different was Mary in her love from that warm, voluptuous woman whom yesterday we met pouring out her passion as the reveler does his fire-water from a brimming beaker! One loved in the flesh, the other loved in the soul—a refined, ethereal love, pure as the crystal bubbles from a mountain spring.

The feelings with which Mary was affected were as if some heavenly light had entered her soul, still more purifying her body. She was like one who had been sailing on a summer sea with pleasant skies overhead, and suddenly enters a lovely harbor still more serene, whose shores are covered with flowers, and where the angel of peace sits at the entrance to forbid the admission of unholy desires.

All Mary thought of was that Harry Morton loved her in preference to all other women, that she should go down the hill of time with his hand in hers, and that they would help each other over the thorny path of life with love, fidelity, and religious faith.

Harry sat clasping her dimpled hand, and did not even attempt to kiss the ends of her fingers, lest he should frighten the spirit of innocence that reigned within her youthful heart. Mary looked as serene as if all happiness had come to her without an effort; as if it were only an inheritance to which she was born. She was at that stage of transition when womanhood bids adieu to childhood for ever, where the rivulet flows gently to the brook, and, swelling its flowery banks, rushes on to the river.

It seemed to the lovers as if this state of things had always existed between them; that they had known and loved each other since the birth of the world; that there had been no thought possessed by the one that the other did not possess; that they were one spirit, pure and indivisible.

They would have sat for hours communing with each other had not the crackling of twigs in the path disturbed them. They started up, and there stood Chic, hat in hand, waiting to be noticed.

"Well, Chic," said Harry, "what would your highness have?"

"Miss Morton's compliments to Miss Samson," said the youth, "and hopes she will not forget her promise to assist her in the last opera."

Chic had seen enough of the lovers in a few seconds, while coming toward them, to render Miss Morton's message in a different style from what it had been delivered to him, namely: "Chic, go tell that music-teacher I'm ready for my lesson, and to come and attend me in the music-room." What a difference will a few pleasant words make in rendering a message! Chic was a natural-born courtier, and fully understood the matter.

"Yes," replied Mary, pleasantly, "I will go to Miss Morton. Harry, please look for Angeline and Bene Trovato."

Harry blew a shrill blast on his silver whistle, and soon the dogs came bounding down the path from the woods, Jupiter with Bene

Trovato on his back, and Ammon with Patch's sun-bonnet, filled with chestnuts, in his mouth, while Patch, with torn frock and apron, gave evidence of her tree-climbing propensities. They all walked to the house, and Mary joined Miss Morton in the music-room.

"I thought you were never coming," said Louise; "we lose so much time, and I am very anxious to get on. I feel more and more how my teachers have neglected me, and I must make up for it—he loves music so."

"Who?" said Mary, inquiringly.

"My king," said Louise, proudly, as she sat down to the piano.

There they practiced until late, Mary bearing patiently with all Louise's humors, and keeping her to the same piece of music until she knew it perfectly. "How tiresome it is!" said Louise, petulantly; "but my king loves music, and I must play and sing my best for him."

Mary could not imagine who her "king" was, but she sympathized with and helped her. She thought to herself, "I could not speak of Harry so to any one; my feelings are too sacred."

At that moment the sound of carriage-wheels was heard, and Louise jumped up. "Good Lord!" she exclaimed, "there comes papa. I wouldn't have him see me in this rig for the world," and she flew out of the room, leaving Mary to arrange the music and close the piano.

She was thus engaged when the door opened and a tall gentleman entered, whom she knew from description to be Mr. Morton. She rose to receive him as he came toward her, and trembled a little at being obliged to introduce herself to the master of the house.

He had approached very closely, thinking Mary was some member of the family, when, looking in her face, he suddenly started back, as if horror-struck, turned pale, and trembled like an aspen.

"Who in the name of heaven are you?" he exclaimed, in a voice almost frozen with horror. "Where do you come from, to mock me with those eyes? Are you a spirit, or a thing of flesh and blood? I command you, tell me what are you doing in this house?"

Mary was thoroughly frightened at such a reception, and did not know what to say. At length she stammered, "I am Miss Samson, the instructor, if you please, to your daughters."

"You an instructor!" he exclaimed, vehemently. "More like the spirit of the injured, come from realms of bliss to denounce

me. You seem too beautiful for a sinful world, and yet how like I how like—" and he sank, almost fainting, into a chair.

"Shall I call any one, sir?" asked Mary, greatly alarmed.

"No," replied Mr. Morton, "do not move from here until I understand this matter." Seizing her by the wrist with the grasp of a madman, he said, sternly, "Don't you ever mention this excitement of mine to any one if you value your peace of mind. Think no more of it," and with this he hurried from the room.

Mary fell back upon the sofa, almost frightened to death. This occurrence had burst upon her like a flash of lightning. What could it all mean? She recalled the excitement of Mrs. Morton at seeing her, and now the frantic behavior of her husband. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "I must return at once to my dear mother, and find safety in her sheltering arms." Then came the remembrance of the warnings she had received from her mother and from Mr. Bernard about keeping her real name a secret. Who was she, then, and why of so much importance that there should be all this mystery?

Then she thought of the happiness she had found at Morton villa—a happiness that had filled her whole being with a new life. Was she to give it all up, and give up Harry, on whom her soul was centered?

Yes, she felt that she must go—nay, more, that she would be driven away by this fierce man, whom she had expected to find a dignified gentleman, but who, instead, had acted toward her like a brute.

As Mary thought of all her troubles she burst into tears and hid her face in the cushion of the sofa, scarcely daring to move until the lord and master of the establishment should give her leave. What would her poor mamma say if she came home dismissed from her employment, just as she had written and told her how happy she was? Mary made up her mind to one thing—she would never leave her mother again for all the advantages in the world.

While all these thoughts were rushing through Mary's mind Mr. Morton had made his way to his wife's apartment, wondering why she had not met him at the front door.

Mrs. Morton was lying in a deep slumber on the bed, where she had thrown herself to catch a few moments' rest before her husband's arrival. Even his abrupt entrance did not awake her, and Mr. Morton's first impulse was to shake her rudely and demand why a strange girl, whose peculiar eyes scared him, should be

domiciled in his house ; but, when he looked at his sleeping wife, with her refined, pale face lying calmly upon her pillow, it struck him there could be no great danger to him. Still, he wanted to know why Mary Samson was in his house, and why it was that her peculiar eyes inflicted such pain upon him.

Mr. Morton touched his wife gently on the shoulder, and she opened her eyes, while a smile of delight illuminated her face as she looked upon him. "Why, husband!" she exclaimed, extending her arms to him; "oh, how I have missed you, and how glad I am to get you back!" But in an instant she saw a great change. His livid face terrified her; his frightened eyes told her something dreadful had happened.

"Good heavens, husband!" she exclaimed, "what has happened?" and she threw her arms around him. He did not stoop to kiss her, but took her by the shoulders and held her off from him, looking into her face as if to see if any treachery against himself lurked there, and seemed as if he would read her very soul. "O husband!" she cried, "why do you look so? What is the matter? Are you ill?"

Mr. Morton shook his head, and in a hollow voice that she never could have recognized, asked, "Who is that girl down-stairs? She must go at once; she terrifies me. Bid her go immediately, or I won't be responsible."

"Poor husband!" said Mrs. Morton, "you are ill; lie down and rest. You have over-exerted yourself."

"No," he replied, "no rest for me. Give me some brandy."

She flew to the wine-case, and he half-filled a tumbler with the fiery liquid, and drank it at a draught. This was so contrary to Mr. Morton's usually abstemious habits that his wife looked at him in amazement.

Then Mr. Morton regarded his wife in a threatening manner. "Tell me at once," he said, "who is this girl, with eyes that harrow up my soul—that bring back the dead and burn into my very heart? Who is she? Why is she here? Let her go, or I shall die."

"My dear husband," said Mrs. Morton, "you must have seen Miss Samson, our daughters' companion—the dearest creature I ever met. Those eyes, which you dread, have brought me much happiness. They remind me of one whom I shall never see again. I should think they would bring you pleasure. Miss Samson is a lovely woman, and I consider myself fortunate in securing the services of one who combines so many virtues and accomplishments."

"I knew it!" exclaimed Mr. Morton, excitedly; "my wife is leagued with my enemies against me. Ah! I see it now! It is her beatified spirit, sent from another world to chasten me. I can not endure it; she must go at once. Don't let me see her again," he said, trembling greatly, "or I know not what will happen."

"But, husband, dear," said his wife, "listen to me. You are suffering under an hallucination. This girl has brought happiness to us all. She is beloved by every one; even Louise has taken to her, and devotes a great deal of time to taking lessons from her, for Miss Samson is an accomplished musician. She paints divinely, and her French accent is perfect."

"What do I care for her accomplishments?" replied Mr. Morton, furiously; "it is her eyes that trouble me. I can not meet them again, or they will kill me."

Mrs. Morton was seriously alarmed, for she thought her husband's mind was affected. "Darling," she said, "you need medical advice; let me send for Dr. Preston."

"No!" he exclaimed, angrily; "no witnesses to my foolish fears, if you please. You have seen enough—more than I ever intended you should, and yet you ought to know every thought of my life. Why should I conceal from the wife of my bosom anything—you who never had a thought hidden from me? Yet if I did you would despise me in your heart."

"O husband!" said Mrs. Morton, "tell me what all this means. Let there be no mystery between us. Your sorrows shared are sorrows half relieved, and no one can help you to bear your load as I can. There is some mystery here, or else you are dreaming."

"Would to God it were a dream," replied Mr. Morton.

"But, darling," said his wife, "why visit your displeasure, or whatever it is that affects you, on this sweet girl, whom you never saw before? Her only fault is that her eyes disturb you, while to me they bring much pleasure."

"Ah! yes," he said, "but I see the eyes of her that's gone looking at me in anger. They accuse me of neglect in the hour of need. I see them in that drear hour when death overtook her and she cried to me for help, and I was not there to give it."

"But, dear husband," said Mrs. Morton, tears streaming from her eyes, "you were not to blame. You surrounded her with every comfort. She had money far beyond her needs, and you paid the last sad honors to her remains. My heart lay dead for years, and now a gleam of sunshine is let into it by that sweet girl; it lives

once more in looking at her face. Do not deprive me of this joy."

"Then let her stay," said Mr. Morton, a sudden thought striking him, "but let me see as little of her as possible while this hallucination lasts. Don't let her be in my path wherever I move. I could not bear it. And you, my wife, do not mention this. It is dreadful enough to sin with no hope of redemption, without having to humble yourself before the wife of your bosom, who had thought you never did a wrong."

"No one, darling," replied Mrs. Morton, "could induce me to think you ever committed an act that would cause you remorse. If you should tell me you had committed the blackest of crimes, I would pray with you to God for mercy, and help you to make amends for the past. But how could you do a wrong? A crime you are incapable of committing. Your life has been filled with honorable deeds, and you stand high in the estimation of all who know you. Don't distress me by conjuring up ideas that should never have an existence in your mind. Be your faults what they may, you have done your duty to mankind. You may have committed the sin of omission, but never a crime; you are too sensitive, and magnify your own faults; whatever they may be, open your heart to me, dear husband, and let me bear half your load. I would willingly bear it all."

"Ah! no," said Mr. Morton, "there are some things one can only confess to God. I do not want you to know that my life has been a lie."

"No," she replied, "and no one could make me believe it. If I knew such to be the case I should die of grief, though loving you to the end."

"There are some crimes so heinous," said he, "that they obliterate all love. Do not seek to know more than is necessary. Conscience makes cowards of us all, and I may have deemed my guilt heavier than it is. God knows, I have suffered enough."

"O husband!" continued Mrs. Morton, "your mind is oppressed by travel and irregular hours. A good night's rest will make you feel like a different person. When you know the worth of my *protégée*, Miss Samson, you will appreciate her as we all do."

"Yes," he muttered, with a sigh, "perhaps so; but, poor girl! I frightened her nearly to death, and told her to remain in the parlor until I permitted her to leave."

"Poor child!" said his wife. "Now, husband, rest and refresh

yourself, and I will go to her." And she departed, leaving Mr. Morton walking moodily up and down the room.

"What a cursed idiot I am!" he said, aloud, "to allow myself to be scared out of my propriety by a pair of eyes—as if there were not thousands of eyes in the world alike. Yet in twenty years I have never before seen a pair like *hers*, and Eleanor recognized the resemblance too; yet she derives happiness from it. O Eleanor, Eleanor! may God grant that you may never know the enormity of my crimes, for I could not outlive your hate and scorn. Yet I feel that that punishment will overtake me in the end.

"But why," he continued, "should I exhibit this weak sensibility to fear—I, who for years have gone on and multiplied my crimes, who have evaded all inquiry, and who know that the dead can not come back to life to testify against me? Bah! I have grown to be a childish old man, and lack the nerve that has tided me over difficulties hitherto. I must put on the smiles of the courtly villain, and keep my eyes open. I must disarm Eleanor of any suspicions she may have, and lay my behavior to the fact that I overtasked my brain. I must learn to look into those eyes without blanching. After all, I feel that I have acted like a fool. I will lie down and sleep, and, when Eleanor sees me again, Richard will be himself once more! I must trump up some tale to satisfy her; she is easily imposed upon."

He threw himself on the bed, and the fatigue of traveling, and the excitement he had gone through, soon put him into a deep sleep.

When Mrs. Morton reached the parlor, Mary exclaimed, "Ah! Mrs. Morton, have you too come to tell me that I must go, when I am so happy here?"

"No, dear child," said she, "I come to ask you to stay, and to forgive the apparent roughness of Mr. Morton, who has been traveling many miles by stage-coach, to which he is not accustomed. His nervous system is all deranged. When you see him again you will find that he has forgotten all that passed, and you will be as great a favorite with him as you are with every one else."

"Is it possible," said Mary, "that so much happiness is in store for me? I thought my life was all gone." Her face recovered its accustomed cheerful expression, and she kissed Mrs. Morton's hand.

"And now," said Mrs. Morton, "I have one favor to ask of you. Promise me not to breathe to any one a syllable of what has happened to-day. It is the only time in his life that Mr. Morton

ever got into such a nervous condition, and I feel very unhappy at his hallucination. I pray that it may not be the forerunner of serious illness."

Mrs. Morton believed all she said, for, when she looked at the beautiful girl before her, she could not conceive how those sweet eyes could appall any one, and certainly feared that Mr. Morton was going to have brain-fever.

"Now, my dear," she resumed, "forget all that has happened, and this evening give us your brightest smiles and sweetest music. I must go and look after Mr. Morton."

She went up-stairs, and found her husband sleeping quietly, with the glass of brandy she had left drained to the bottom.

"Poor husband!" she said; "how strange that such notions should get into his head!"

In honor of Mr. Morton's return home, all the gentlemen who made up the little circle—Deville, George May, and Vere Saye, including the naval officers—also Mr. and Mrs. Eton and Flossy—were assembled at Morton villa.

It takes a day or two in an establishment like Morton villa to find out people's sympathies for each other, and this was a matter which Mrs. Morton perfectly understood.

She had never known exactly how to place Mr. Vere Saye at dinner, as he was a most undemonstrative person, and showed no partiality for any lady. He ought to have been a great ladies' man, for he was full of brilliant conversation, and could even descend to the little gossip that amuses women—the airy nothings, the froth of conversation, which is more acceptable than the solid matter that soon palls upon the appetite.

To-day, for the first time, Mrs. Morton assigned Flossy to him. Flossy twittered all over at this unexpected piece of good luck, and Vere Saye smiled as if he too considered it a piece of good fortune. "My star must be in the ascendant to-night," he said to Flossy. "It is not often such a rose falls to my lot."

Flossy smiled. "I wonder," she said to herself, "if he is engaged. He's an Oxford man, and those fellows don't commit themselves with a girl that way if they don't mean what they say. Half of them study divinity, and they certainly wouldn't say soft things to a young lady if they didn't mean it. I don't believe popsy knows anything about it when he says Vere Saye wouldn't notice me if we met in England, because he belongs to the aristocracy *there*—as if the aristocracy here isn't every bit as good as in Eng-

land. Anyhow, I intend to try my prettiest, and quote poetry at him."

Flossy set to work to think what particular things she could talk about, and was greatly astonished, when the Oxford man had seated himself by her side at the table, to hear him exclaim, "Now this is jolly, isn't it? Miss Flossy, were you ever in love?"

If Flossy had been struck by lightning she could not have been more surprised. She was on the point of asking him if he had taken his degrees in the green gown or black gown, for she understood that college men wore some kind of gown; then she thought of asking him whose *fag* he was, and if he passed high in fagging. She knew there was a good deal of fagging going on at Oxford, but she didn't exactly understand what the article was. Vere Saye's question, in fact, knocked all Flossy's calculations in the head.

Vere Saye had seen a great deal of Flossy since he came to Hawks' Roost, but had not paid her any particular attention. He thought she preferred the conversation of George May, Harry Morton, or Berry Sharp—he was such a great hulk of a fellow. He knew Flossy's caliber to an inch, and felt quite competent to keep her in subjection for an hour or two.

When he asked her the question, "Were you ever in love?" you might have knocked Flossy down with a straw.

"Did you call me Flossy?" she said, looking at him archly.

"Yes, indeed," replied he; "what else should I call you?"

"Oh! it is so nice in you to be so friendly! You might have been aristocratic, and called me Miss Carrolton."

"Perhaps you would prefer I should call you Miss Carrolton."

"No! no!" she replied; "Flossy always."

"Why," he said, "you seem to me as if you were a dear little sister, and that I had been calling you Flossy all my life."

"Ah!" replied Flossy, "I don't like the little sister part—that's stupid. A little cousin would sound better and feel better."

"Then 'little cousin' be it," said Vere Saye.

Mrs. Morton even noticed the congeniality existing between Miss Bane and Master Slings. The latter gentleman was rigged out with gold chains, with coins depending therefrom, on which decorations he greatly prided himself. Miss Bane, of course, couldn't help noticing them, as the worthy sailing-master intended she should do, informing her that they were rather old, having come over to England some time ago with the Romans.

"Ah!" said Miss Bane, "I have always wanted so to get a coin with the year of my birth on it."

"Oh, my!" said Mr. Slings, "it's very difficult to get those very old coins now, as they are out of date."

Miss Bane bridled up a little at this, but poor Mr. Slings was quite unconscious of having said anything out of the way. "These coins," said he, "were handed down to me from my aunts' sisters, and are thought to be as old, if not older, than Daniel Lambert."

Mrs. Morton had managed to pair her darling Harry off with Mary, whether by chance or intention is not known; but Mrs. Morton prided herself on her management, and, rather than not have her dinner pass off agreeably, she would have thrown Harry and Mary together at the risk of their getting entangled.

Perhaps, and the most likely thing after all, Mrs. Morton would not have been displeased to see an attachment spring up between these two. Day by day her heart had grown toward Mary Samson. She saw in her what she once hoped to find in her daughter Louise—but Louise had made her mother's life anything but pleasant.

Louise never showed her mother any attention, or manifested the least affection for either of her parents. She could revel in *une grande passion*, as the Frenchmen say, that set all smaller passions at defiance. She could never have an affection for anything. It must be an absorbing passion, or nothing.

Mrs. Morton could not help seeing the difference between Louise and Mary—one the embodiment of the purest love, the other the representative of the grossest passions. In her heart Mrs. Morton loved Mary a thousand times more than she did her own daughter, for she felt that Mary was the woman to make her son happy, and she hoped that he would take a fancy to that dear girl.

She did not suspect that Harry and Mary had already arranged matters between themselves to their own satisfaction under the old oak-tree, and that the contract had been signed, sealed, and delivered in presence of the old monarch of Hawks' Throne, now a venerable bird of some fifty years' standing, and attested by some of the royal family of hawks that were present on the occasion.

It had been one of their privileges for years to witness these pledges, for the old oak was a famous place for the meeting of lovers, and had been since the time when Onkahaye, the great-great-grandmother of Uncas, the last of the Mohicans, pledged her love to Ohmaha, the bitter enemy of her race.

The hawks had it all written down, on the broad leaves of the ancient oak, in ink that would never fade.

As Mr. Morton did not join the party at dinner, a cup of tea and some toast was sent up to him. He had sent word that he did not feel well enough to go to the table; but no sooner had the company seated themselves—and he knew they would be occupied there for two hours—than he dressed quickly and descended to the library, where, closing doors and windows, he rang the bell and sent for Edgar Lane.

Mr. Morton paced the room impatiently. Edgar Lane entered.

"How do you do, Edgar?" said Mr. Morton, but, on looking at his secretary, the banker started back, shocked at his worn appearance and deeply sunk eyes. "Are you ill, Edgar?" he asked. "You have been working too hard, and require a change."

"I am not ill, sir," said Edgar; "I am quite able to do my work, and much more if you think proper to give it to me."

"Sit down, then," said Mr. Morton; "I want to talk to you." Mr. Morton's manner was cold and decided, and there was a gleam in his eye which Edgar knew foretold mischief.

"Edgar," he said, "listen to me, and don't answer a word until I have finished, and then make your explanations."

Edgar grew paler than ever at this opening.

"I found your mother and yourself," said Mr. Morton, "ten years ago in very destitute circumstances. She told her tale of woe, and my heart sympathized with her. I provided for her immediate wants and future comfort. I took you, a ragged boy, clothed you, sent you to a good school, and finally, when you were of proper age, to Harvard, where you enjoyed every advantage. I had you instructed in law, and in all other matters that would fit you to take the place of my secretary and confidential agent. I wanted a person closely connected with me, and disconnected with anything outside my business. I was very confidential with you in regard to my eldest daughter"—Edgar started—"told you my hopes and expectations with regard to her, and cautioned you, as you would be a member of my family and thrown into intimacy with her, never to raise your eyes toward her except in the most respectful manner. I told you that when I employed a person my rule was to tell him first all that was expected of him, and if he became unfaithful to a single trust, I would trample on him remorselessly. Let me ask you how have you fulfilled your trust?"

"I suppose, sir," replied Edgar, "this is intended to be my dis-

charge, a severance of all ties between us, to throw me out of your employment, and prevent my getting employment in any place where you can reach me ; to throw my poor mother, in her old age, on the pitiless world to starve, and drive me to desperation !” Here Edgar’s feelings overcame him, and he burst into tears.

Mr. Morton was not the least affected by this manifestation of feeling. He scorned all such weaknesses himself, and could not understand them in others ; he was as cold as marble.

“ You admit,” said he, “ that my sentence would be a just one ? ”

“ That depends,” answered Edgar, with a quivering voice and a look of hopeless resignation, “ upon how wrongly you think I have acted. There are cases where the heart runs away with the best intentions in the world ; and there is no offense where there is no crime, and no misconduct that can not be condoned.”

“ That plea of the heart will not go down with me,” said Mr. Morton ; “ it is the head that I look to. If a man’s heart is so weak that he can’t resist temptation when he has been particularly cautioned against it, he is unfit to be trusted with the affairs of a great banking business like mine. If you could set my orders at defiance in the case of my daughter, you could with the same propriety set them at defiance in other matters, and constitute yourself a judge in some case that would bring ruin on me.”

“ But how,” said Edgar, “ do you know that I have disobeyed your orders ? What if my heart has gone astray, and my head has remained true to its trust ? ”

Mr. Morton looked at him in indignation.

“ Edgar,” he said, “ don’t add falsehood to breach of trust, though one naturally follows the other. You have sinned beyond redemption—don’t add a lie to it.” Edgar’s eyes flashed, but Mr. Morton continued : “ Read those letters—written by you to my daughter when she went to Madame Faucet’s school—letters which filled her mind with ideas calculated to make her after-life a curse to her, and withdrawing her attention from studies which, by proper direction, would have made her an ornament to society, instead of which she left school an ignoramus. You not only kept up this clandestine intercourse through Miss Spanker, but you had interviews with her in the streets at improper hours. Tell me, is there any reason why I should not punish you, as a warning to all traitors ? ”

“ None, sir,” replied Edgar Lane. “ I have nothing to say. I deserve all that you inflict upon me, but, for God’s sake, do not

make me the means of killing my mother. Let me gain a pittance for her, if I have to work in rags myself."

"You said just now," continued Mr. Morton, coldly, "that there was no offense that can not be condoned. As long as you have committed no crime, the door is not altogether closed against you. There are excuses to be made for youth's first offense, but I do not believe in any one guilty of repeated acts of dishonor. It rests with yourself whether you will be forgiven and retained in your present position?" Here Edgar's face expressed the most profound astonishment, mingled with joy. "I have still," resumed Mr. Morton, "some confidence in your business capacity, weak as your heart is in love matters. There is always a way for one to indemnify his employer when he has committed a serious fault against him: he should make any sacrifice that his employer may desire to save the credit of his house."

"I will do anything on God's earth to serve you, sir," said Edgar, "if you will only not publish my disgrace to the world, and will permit me to gain an honorable livelihood."

"What if I retain you in my service?" said Mr. Morton—"nay, more, what if I should view leniently what has passed, and hold out hopes for the future such as you never dreamed of?"

"Oh, then," exclaimed Edgar, "I would imperil my soul for you." But his large eyes suddenly became fixed, as if looking at something in the far-off distance, and he stood gazing for at least two minutes. Mr. Morton did not interrupt him. Suddenly Edgar awoke from his vision, sighed heavily, and turned very pale, while tears stood in his eyes.

"I will make no terms with you, Mr. Morton," he said. "Do with me as you please. I have sinned against you grievously, and you have held out hopes of forgiveness with a generosity I had no right to expect. There is no task that you can impose on me that I will not think easy after your noble treatment of me to-day. I will be your veriest slave, if it costs me my honor and my life."

"What I shall require of you," said Mr. Morton, "will neither affect your honor nor your life. It is merely to travel, and gain some information for me, which I can obtain only through a third person. There may be some little things about this matter which may seem to be duplicity, but there are people in the world of such devilish cunning that you must fight them with their own weapons—beat fire with fire—and resort to methods that would not ordinarily be admissible."

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See! there he stands now, leaning against a tree.

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"I shall have no compunctions of conscience, sir, in executing your orders," was Edgar's reply to these assurances by Mr. Morton. "I am sure that whatever you give me to do you have good reasons therefor, which it does not become me to question. You can rely on me implicitly, sir."

"Still I must caution you," said Mr. Morton, "that there are risks you will have to run in this business that might seriously compromise you. I would not ask you to undertake it if it were not of the most vital importance to me. I need the aid of some person entirely devoted to my interests. Much is at stake, and a large amount of money involved."

"I will do whatever may be required of me."

"You will have to deal with a very subtle lawyer," continued Mr. Morton, "and must be all the time on your guard. Your knowledge of law will be a great help to you in dealing with this man. He is as cunning as the devil, and has thwarted me at every point by giving false information that has kept me from my rights for years. He has in his possession some valuable papers that of right belong to me. I must get hold of those papers, and obtain information where the persons I am looking for are to be found. This can only be done by your getting into his employ, seizing the papers and giving them to me, and by finding out where the persons I am looking for are to be found."

Edgar started, and Mr. Morton noticed the movement. "It is not too late," said the banker, "to withdraw from the enterprise if you have no stomach for it. I want but my own—the people I am looking for I desire to benefit."

"I have no intention of withdrawing," said Edgar, "if it costs me all I love in life. I will execute your orders to the letter. I have no scruples of conscience, and, indeed, I can see nothing in all this to raise any scruples. When shall I be required to go?"

"To-morrow night, by the eleven o'clock down boat," replied Mr. Morton. "I will have all your letters of introduction ready, and written instructions for your guidance, for there must be no mistake about the matter."

Again Edgar assumed that fixed expression as if he were gazing into the far distance; then recovering, and sighing heavily as before, he said, "I will be ready, sir, at the time appointed."

"You had better go and prepare yourself," said Mr. Morton. "I will see that you are well supplied with money." Mr. Morton

then repaired to his room and threw himself on the bed, where he seemed to be sleeping.

By this time the company began to assemble in the parlors, and Mrs. Morton, who sought her husband, found him sleeping soundly. "Thank heaven!" she exclaimed, "the crisis is over." She kissed him on the forehead, when he awoke, and, seeing his wife, smiled pleasantly.

"My dear Eleanor," he said, "I have had some frightful dreams. How did I get up here from the boat, for I seem to have forgotten everything since I landed?"

"Why, darling," said Mrs. Morton, "you came up in the carriage, and brought home such strange fancies with you that I thought you demented."

"Do you know, Eleanor," he said, "that I have felt very queer for two days past while traveling, and quarreled with the passengers in the stage? I refused to eat at any of the stopping-places. I suppose my stomach was empty, and I got off my balance. That brandy you gave me was all that saved me from a spell of sickness."

"Thank heaven!" said Mrs. Morton. "Do you remember how you frightened that poor Miss Samson when you came in?"

"Miss Samson!" said Mr. Morton; "who is she? I know nothing of her, or of frightening any one."

"Oh! never mind," said his wife. "Poor fellow, how you must have suffered for want of proper food! Now dress yourself, and come down and let the company welcome you home."

Mr. Morton dressed himself with scrupulous care, and, with twenty lies on his soul and his heart, in fear of he knew not what, he walked down-stairs in the most dignified manner, his wife leaning on his arm, to impose on a crowd of people who looked upon him as the incarnation of truth and honor.

Mr. Morton shook hands with every one; hoped they had enjoyed themselves in his absence, and promised himself great pleasure in the enjoyment of their society in the future.

When he came to where his son was sitting with Miss Samson, Harry rose to receive him, and Mrs. Morton introduced him to Mary, who looked at him wonderingly with her great brown eyes, thinking to herself, "Can this courteous gentleman be the one that treated me so rudely this morning?" As Mr. Morton's eyes met Mary's, he trembled visibly, but he held out his hand benignantly; and, as he touched hers, a shock went through his body as if from a galvanic battery.

He staggered back, turned deadly pale, let go Mary's hand as if stung by an asp, and dropped into an easy-chair.

Mrs. Morton's lip quivered. What could all this mean? What caused this excitement? However, Mr. Morton soon rallied, and explained his emotion by saying that he had left his chamber too soon—that he was not well—that he had been seized with faintness, but would be better presently.

But he did not look toward Mary again, and shortly retired to his library on plea of important business.

There he summoned Edgar Lane, and said to him: "I have here two blank sheets of paper—one with Mr. Vandensen's, the other with Mr. Deville's name. They are letters of introduction for you to Mr. Stephen Lindsay, of Boston, the lawyer of whom I spoke to you. Fill the letters up from this," placing, as he spoke, a rough draught before the young man, "and come back to me here to-morrow morning at eleven." So saying, he retired to rest.

Meanwhile, the company below enjoyed themselves to their hearts' content. Louise had induced Conrad to join the party. "O my king!" she said, "life is so dreary without you. I have a dear little corner on the porch, where we can sit the whole evening, and where my caresses shall bring you back to health."

Poor Conrad looked pale and wan enough. He got no better, and the humiliation of the blow inflicted by Lane made him shudder whenever he thought of it.

At five minutes before eleven, Vere Saye was in his room at the Dove, and at eleven Chic came out of the tree by the window.

"There, sir," said he, "is a list of the things in those trunks—what you might call an *olla podrida*."

"Were there no love-letters, Chic?" said Vere Saye; "this doesn't amount to much."

"No, sir," replied Chic, "I suppose not," and he looked slyly at his employer. "I suppose if I had found a skeleton of a murdered man, or two or three dead bodies salted down, or a sea-serpent, or the North Pole, that it would not have amounted to much, cause why—when a gentleman gets spoony his mind runs altogether on love-letters. I wonder you don't get some of your own, sir. If you don't care about that list, I'll keep it myself; it may turn out useful some of these days."

"No," said Vere Saye; "on the whole, Chic, I think I'll keep it. It will do to light a cigar with," and he put it in his pocket-

book, on which Chic made a curious noise with his mouth that sounded like drawing a cork.

"Now, Chic," said his master, "keep your eyes open ; make a note of everything that goes on, and let me know each night at ten o'clock the events of the day. Good-night, Chic, I'm sleepy." Chic plunged out of the window and into the tree, and was on the ground and off like a flash.

Vere Saye sat musing for some time. "Dear little Flossy," he said aloud, "how pretty and how innocent she is ! A dear little winning thing, that a man could take to his heart with the perfect assurance that she would nestle there for the rest of her days. But I don't like old Carrolton. How came he to be the father of such a daughter ? He resembles her in nothing, and looks to me like an old dead beat, who would rob or do anything if he got the opportunity. He passes himself off as a cotton agent, buying millions on account of a London house. We will hunt up his status, and see if he is respectable, and, by Jove ! if all turns out right—well—I might do worse. I wouldn't marry Louise Morton, with all her beauty and wealth, if there wasn't another woman in the world."

He closed the window, drew the curtain, and went to bed, but could not sleep for thinking of Flossy and her bewitching ways.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE CAPTURE OF THE PIRATES.

WHEN Allan Dare gave Belette and Tormenteur their instructions, he knew they would be carried out to the letter, unless something unforeseen should happen, and he therefore gave himself no further concern about the matter. He had something on hand which required his presence elsewhere, and he expected, when he returned, to find all the pirates bagged.

Belette, according to his instructions, went, the night before the attack was to be made, to Jacob Moses's store, and entered it readily by means of the key which Allan Dare had given him. The large front apartment was filled with articles in the ship-chandlers' line, and the dark back room, with one outlet, contained a good many barrels, filled and empty.

Belette blocked up the outlet with some of the barrels, placing them two tiers deep, and arranged the others so that he could place twenty men behind them without being seen from the outer store, and partly closed the door. There was room for ten or twelve men more under the counter in the front store.

Having satisfied himself on these points, and arranged all the barricades, he proceeded to examine under the store. On raising the trap-door, by touching a spring, Belette saw a place resembling a ship's hold, nearly filled with all kinds of merchandise, in boxes, barrels, and bags, some of the latter containing silver-ware.

Belette gave little time to the examination of the goods, but satisfied himself that there was no outlet, and that the hold, which was cemented on the bottom and sides to exclude dampness, contained about six hundred tons of stolen goods. He then shut the trap and left the store, locking the door behind him.

Belette spent the next day in making arrangements with English Charley and Tormenteur for the capture of the pirates. Boats were prepared, and all Allan Dare's orders carried out.

At nine o'clock that night Belette repaired to the drinking-den frequented by Jacob Moses, and, watching an opportunity, pasted a red wafer in the usual place, and shortly after the same man who had before made his appearance entered and called for his mug of ale. Seating himself near the wafer, he slyly removed it, and soon after went away.

Belette followed the man, but by taking a short cut he reached the wharf first, and saw him shove off. It took Belette but a few minutes to post his men in the store, cautioning them to be quiet, and then stationed others at the signal-lights, the signal for uncovering which would be a pistol-shot. He then returned to the store and took charge.

The party were supplied with five or six dark lanterns in the back store, and three under the counter, all well covered up.

It might have been an hour before Belette heard the fumbling of a key in the lock. The door opened, and a party of men moved quietly in, laden with boxes and bags. Their dark lanterns threw a dim light around as they placed their burdens on the floor.

"There, by G—!" said a voice, "that's the best run we ever made. Open the hatch and hustle 'em down; we've got to make two more runs to-night."

The creaking of the hatch as it was raised was now heard.

"There, boys," resumed the speaker, "eight of you get down

and receive the goods, and see that you make good stowage, for we require all the room we can get. The other schooner will be here full, in a day or two, I'll bet."

The men were heard jumping down and scattering through the cellar.

"Here comes the eighth bag, which Jim and Peeler brought up," said the voice, "and it's a buster! It's as much as me and my mate can do to lift it. Look out there below!"

As they were in the act of lowering the bag, the men below holding up their hands to receive the goods, they felt a tap on the head from Belette's club, and were pushed headlong into the hold.

Belette closed the hatch in the twinkling of an eye, and, blowing a whistle, ten men jumped from behind the barrels and stood with their weight on the hatch.

For a moment there was silence below, and then a howl, that would have appalled ordinary men, came up from the lower regions. Suddenly five or six shots came through the plank of the hatch, and one of Belette's men was wounded by the discharge.

"All the worse for you!" roared Belette; "you shall starve for that! Now one of you run down and uncover the lights. There's no use making a noise with a pistol." One of the men obeyed the command, and the lights were hoisted.

"Tell English Charley to bring the van to the door with the dogs," said Belette.

This was soon accomplished, and, when the van drove up, out sprang eight large dogs in leash, in charge of a huge negro. These animals were a cross between the bull-dog and blood-hound, and as they licked their chops their cruel, blood-shot eyes betokened their readiness for the fray. This was a new device of Allan Dare's, intended to meet cases of this kind, and, in anticipation of the event, the dogs had been kept half starved for two days.

As the huge creatures at Belette's order came into the store, even the policemen were appalled at the sight of them. Every precaution had been taken that the dogs should receive as little harm as possible from the knives of those whom they attacked. Their necks and backs were protected by fine steel-net armor, and their legs and paws had been well greased, so that it was difficult to hold them.

"Raise the hatch a little," said Belette, "and let me parley with those fellows, although it is probably of no use."

When the hatch was raised a little way he called to the men below : " Come, boys, it's no use. Give up, or I'll set on the dogs ! "

" D—n your dogs ! " said a surly voice from below ; " we'll soon settle 'em, and you too, if there's any power in a barrel of gun-powder we're bringing to the fore. We'll go to hell together—you, your d—d dogs, and all ! "

The policemen were appalled at this announcement, and some of them moved toward the door, which Belette observing, he locked it and pocketed the key.

" Now," he said, " we're like the gentleman that invaded Mexico and burned his ships. We must capture the vermin below, and we have no time to lose. Stand by to throw up the hatch. Fire a volley when the pirates make a rush, and, Cerberus"—addressing the negro—" stand by to unloose the dogs."

When the hatch was raised the pirates ceased their efforts to get at the barrel of powder, and rushed for the opening, where they were saluted with twelve pistol-shots.

" Let go the dogs ! " yelled Belette ; and in a moment the savage animals sprang upon the pirates, three of whom had fallen wounded by pistol-shots.

" Use your knives on the dogs, men ! " shouted the leader of the pirates ; " the powder is almost ready, and all I want is a light."

At that moment a light wreath of smoke was seen to issue from the back part of the hold.

Two of the policemen were so frightened that they seized Belette and demanded the key to unlock the door.

" We did not enter to be blown up like rats," they exclaimed.

Belette pushed them into the hold, shut the hatch, and said, " Now let the dogs do the rest ! Pass down the fire-buckets"—of which there were a dozen hanging on the wall ; " open the door, and form a line to the river. English Charley's men on the outside will join in."

The door was thrown open, and the line formed as directed. At this moment pistol-shots were heard on the river. " Ah ! " exclaimed Belette, " Tormenteur is at work." Then all was silent.

In the mean time a terrible scene was being enacted below. Dreadful cries, mixed with the howls and growling of the dogs, were heard. Each of the dogs had seized a man and overpowered him. The two remaining pirates used their pistols and knives on the animals with little effect. Presently the dogs turned on these two, and loud cries came through the hatch for mercy.

"Open the hatch!" said Belette, coolly; "it's all settled, and the schooner too is ours."

When the hatch was opened the dogs were seen worrying the men as a terrier worries rats, while the pirates, with blood streaming from their many wounds, were striking desperately with their knives to keep the animals off.

One dog was dragging in his powerful jowls a huge sailor, who, with a burning match in his hand, was trying to pull the dog toward a barrel of powder, over which a man, with one eye pulled from the socket, was reaching for the match, having knocked out the head of the barrel. The pirates evidently intended to die game.

Belette coolly watched the proceedings. The policemen were very nervous, and cast anxious looks toward the open door, as if they would like to run away.

Belette drew a pistol from his belt and said, "I will shoot the first man that moves from his post, as I do that infernal scoundrel who is trying to blow us up!" Quickly raising his pistol, he settled the burly pirate by putting a ball through his head. The match in the ruffian's hand ignited the light material in the hold, but the blaze was quickly extinguished by the line of buckets.

While this was taking place the man at the powder-barrel was trying to reach a pistol, for the purpose of snapping it and igniting the powder; but at the moment he was seized by one of the dogs, who crushed his wrist and totally disabled him, causing him to utter the most frightful shrieks.

"Now, Cerberus, call off your dogs and muzzle them," said Belette. "The fight is over!"

So it seemed, for there was no longer any resistance. A fearful groaning showed that the life had been almost worried out of the pirates. The dogs seemed in no haste to relinquish their prey after having once obtained a taste of blood. Their blood-shot eyes glared with rage and their mouths frothed, but they followed Cerberus out of the hold and into the van.

"That's enough for one night!" said Belette. "We want some left as evidence, for some of them will tell all they know to save what remains of their carcasses."

"Come up here!" he said to the two policemen he had thrown into the cellar. They rose from behind some barrels, where they had been crouching with fear, and came forward in the most abject manner.

"Put these cowards in irons," said Belette; "they shall be

taught their duty ; and let me say to some others of you who were disposed to show the white feather, whenever you work with me don't think of running away till I set you the example. You will be safe in following my movements." The men were lost in admiration of this athletic Frenchman, who scorned all danger, had the strength of a giant, and was as cool in the midst of difficulties as if he were at a festival.

Though terribly mangled, only two of the ruffians in the hold had been killed. The wounded were carried on improvised stretchers to the river and lowered into the boats. The police-surgeon and his assistant had been sent for, and, as soon as they arrived, the boats shoved off and pulled for the schooner, which Belette felt sure Tormenteur had carried by boarding.

Sure enough, Tormenteur was waiting to receive him at the gangway when Belette got to the schooner. Tormenteur informed his friend that he had had no difficulty, that when he got on board the schooner the pirates were in the cabin gambling, with the exception of two, who were asleep below. He rushed into the cabin with his followers and secured the pirates, but two of his men received pistol-balls—one in the shoulder, the other in the fleshy part of the thigh. The two villains asleep below were secured by putting the hatch on over the fore-peak. Thus ended this bloody affair, with no loss of life on the part of the police.

The police-surgeons took charge of the wounded and dressed their wounds, although all the prisoners were kept in irons and strongly guarded, as they were considered too desperate to trust without every precaution.

Then Belette returned to the shore and examined the thieves' storehouse, to be sure that there was no possibility of fire breaking out from sparks that might be smoldering. He then locked the door and went up-town.

This affair was so quietly conducted as to escape the notice of outsiders. It was at a time of night when most people were abed, and the firing took place in the hold, from which the sounds reached the street very imperfectly.

It was now broad daylight, and Belette, having eaten his breakfast, dressed himself in his best, and at eight o'clock called at Allan Dare's lodgings according to orders. He found Allan sitting at breakfast, reading the newspaper.

"Well, Belette," he said, "how goes it this morning ? pirates escaped you, eh ?"

"No indeed, sir," replied Belette; "we captured them all, with a ship-load of plunder. The dogs did their work well, sir. I first—"

"Never mind," interrupted Allan Dare, smiling, "I know all about it, and am sorry to cheat you out of the pleasure of telling me the whole affair; but I saw it all. I was on the river in a yawl when the schooner was captured, and ten minutes later I was in front of the store, and could hear the dogs doing their work. Of course I didn't want to be seen. But here is something that will please you better than a long story," and he put five hundred dollars in the Frenchman's hand; "and here," he continued, "are fifty apiece for the policemen who did their duty."

"Two of them flunked, and should be discharged, as we want no flunkies. Good-morning, sir," and Belette went home to get some sleep.

Ten minutes later Allan Dare's wagon drove up to the door, and the Rev. Mr. Raymond came forth and stepped into the vehicle. "To the police-office," he said.

When he announced himself at the police-office he was at once admitted, and found the chief of police reading in the morning paper some criticisms on his own shortcomings in not having discovered the burglars that robbed Mr. Eton.

"Well, friend Raymond," remarked the chief, "I am catching it again this morning about that Eton business."

"Bosh!" said the reverend; "don't mind the press. It has sunk into insignificance; it gives us nothing but twaddle, without ideas. You pick up a newspaper nowadays, and find that in the editor's opinion there is no virtue left in the country except what he possesses. An honest editor might, in a measure, guide public opinion and improve public morals, but as the case stands the public don't think much of the press, except that it amuses them. Those who pay no attention to its slanders outlive its malice." Then dropping into his querulous style, the visitor said, "I come to make a complaint."

"Against whom?" inquired the chief.

"Against Allan Dare."

The chief burst out laughing. "Well, sir, pray what has that scamp been doing now?"

"He has been interfering with the navy, sir; he has gone on the high seas and captured pirates, sir. Last night he captured a schooner loaded with the plunder of which the people along the river have been robbed during the past three months. A number

of pirates captured and dreadfully mangled by dogs at the depot on shore, which contains six hundred tons of stolen goods ; one of the head devils in custody—Jacob Moses, *alias* Moses Grafft."

"What! he that escaped from prison eight years ago?"

"The same," said the reverend, "and whose house has been for six years the rendezvous for all the most desperate thieves in New York. Allan Dare is on the track of the moving spirit of this business, and, as sure as there's a God in heaven, he'll break it up and ruin these poor industrious people if you don't check him."

The chief laughed heartily and said: "Allan Dare, you are too absurd. Tell me in plain English what it's all about, and how it happened. Let old Parson Raymond go to sleep a little while."

Allan thereupon related all the particulars to the chief. "Now," said he, when he finished the narrative, "this must not be known for a week at least. We must keep the men under guard on board the schooner, and not let the papers get hold of the affair, as it would interfere with my plans."

The chief promised what Allan requested, and to issue the necessary orders for keeping the prisoners on board the schooner. "Dare," he said, "I owe you more than I shall be able to repay, and all I can say is that I believe you could beat Vidocq and Le Coque together."

"I must leave you," said Allan, "for I have my hands full. Just think what we have accomplished since April—captured Cole, a head-center; captured a gang of river pirates, with six hundred tons of plunder and their vessel; broken up two of their meeting places; all great robberies in the city put a stop to, and a good deal more that as yet you know nothing about, but of which I will tell you in good time. In six months more New York will be a model city." With this prediction Allan bade the chief good-morning and departed.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

REVELATIONS.

MR. MORTON rose early the morning after his arrival at Hawks' Roost to prepare instructions for Edgar Lane, who was to start at eleven that night for Boston.

Edgar felt great uneasiness at his forced departure, as it would leave the field to his rival, and there was no knowing how long he might be absent, but he could make no excuse for postponing his departure. His employer had behaved to him, he thought, in the most generous manner, and he felt that he must sacrifice all his personal interests for him. But he determined to have an interview with Louise before he left, and come to an understanding with her.

Conrad seemed to be growing worse every day. The doctor expressed the opinion that his disease was *pyæmia*, and that he must have change of air, which he promised to take in a few days. Conrad was, however, so absorbed in his love affair that he thought it sweeter to remain where he was and die rather than be deprived, even for a few days, of Louise's society.

Every morning at eleven o'clock he came forth from his room, pale and emaciated, and Louise, with anxious eyes and flushed face, would meet him on the porch and accompany him to the great linden-tree, near which a *marquès* was pitched, and a sofa with eider-down cushions placed for Conrad to recline on.

"O my king!" Louise would say, "it makes my heart ache to see you so pale and wan. Come to our bower and let me kiss the life-blood back again into that pale face."

She would sit at his side until the blood would rush madly through his veins, his eyes would glow like diamonds, and the hectic flush on his cheek would vie with the richest blush on that of a maiden. She would lay her burning cheek against his, wind her arms about his neck, and look into his eyes as if she would see into his very soul.

"O my king! what would become of me," she would say, "if you were to die—you who have only known how my heart can love, and to whom only I have given my maiden kisses? you for whom I would leave father and mother, wealth, everything, and go to a desert island? I have no thought but of you. The world is to me a solitude when you are not at my side. When you depart, my sighs will be so great they'll fill the sails of a lofty frigate, and make the water froth beneath her bows. I will watch the stars at night and think to see in them the brightness of your eyes. I will smell the fragrant rose, and deem it the sweet aroma of your breath. All day I will watch the horizon with a telescope to see if your ship is coming into port. Tell me," said she, "do you love me like this?"

"I love you with all my heart and soul," replied Conrad. "I

can do no more than this ; the happiness in having you near me is what I think the happiness of heaven must be. Your coming brings with it the freshness of a bright spring day, when gentle Nature with her genial warmth is quickening into life the birds and flowers, and everything seems to shine with paradisaal beauty. You bring with you all the fragrance of the morning flowers, fresh with the glistening dew, and the joy of your sweet presence almost overpowers me with its heavenly sweetness. Your voice to me is like the music of the gentle dove sitting in some sequestered nook cooing to her mate ; but ah ! my loved one, there seems to be something I can not attain. My soul is not attuned to happiness ; my mind is sorely oppressed by day, and with unhappy dreams at night. One dream comes to me constantly. I see you on the opposite bank of a river, beckoning me to cross, and whenever I essay to do so the stream puts on an angry look, its waters rise mountains high, and near its opposite bank runs a stream of blood. Four times have I dreamed this, but still these hallucinations do not diminish the strength of my love for you. I love you so because I am the first you have ever loved. I would not wear a rose within my breast whose fragrance had been breathed by any one else. I would not kiss any one with love on whose lips had rested anything heavier than the moonlight or the slightest zephyr ; even a moonbeam resting too long upon a loved one's lips would give me pangs of jealousy. Can you say your lips are as chaste as this ?

"Fie ! fie ! my king !" replied Louise. "Why, what a doubt ! You alone have taught me what love is. My heart is made of fire when it comes near yours, and a flame leaps forth to meet its partner, as you may often see it jumping from one stack of hay to another, consuming all before it. That's my love—as true to you as the sun is to the day. My lips ? ask them with one sweet kiss what they'll say. They'll tell you that the wave when it kisses the wind is not more pure than they. My heart turns to ice when with another. I am not even decorous enough to do what is required of me by conventional rules, because I have always been so cold to men. O my king ! I am never ice to you."

"No," said Conrad, "I sometimes think you'll deem me cold, and not meeting the ardor of your love, and yet I rather think I'd like to have you be more a miser of your kisses and make me sue for them more. Things lightly won are not highly prized ; at least, you'd find me more grasping for your favors if they were harder to obtain. You know that men will delve ten times as hard to reach

the brilliant diamond as they will the cheaper dross of gold. One prizes more the rose that has the sharpest thorns ; one climbs most eager for the highest nest."

"Why, Conrad," replied Louise, pouting, "your illness has made you unkind. I'll be more chary of my kisses in the future ; you'll need to climb to get one. I'll be so modest I'll only blow them to you, when you are far at sea, through one of your large speaking-trumpets you have told me of. I'll no more run my fingers through your curly hair, loosing the electric sparks that lie waiting for my touch to dart like meteors through your blood. O king ! you've hurt me greatly ; you're not yourself to-day."

"I know I'm not," replied Conrad. "One often feels, sweet girl, moods he can not control, and certain thoughts run riot through my brain. You know what the poet says : 'Beware of jealousy, that green-eyed monster ; it makes the food it feeds upon.' I'm jealous of the air that kisses your cheek, the light zephyrs that wantonly blow among your curls. I am jealous when your eye reflects any image but my own. I'd have it for my looking-glass, in which to see myself all day long. I'd murder him who'd intercept your smile and think it his. I'm such a miser of your love I'd not forgive you if you'd ever part with even an old soiled glove of mine."

"But tell me, dear Louise—I have been on the point of asking you several times—what does this constant tone of defiance with which that Edgar Lane greets you mean ? It is an air of disrespect which, as it seems to me, your father ought not to tolerate. On ship-board I would deal in a summary manner with such a spirit. I have noticed him dogging our steps when we have walked together, or sat idly talking under the shadow of some spreading tree. See ! there he stands now, leaning against a tree, with his arms folded, and looking scornfully at us both. Tell me, has Edgar Lane ever dared to aspire to any notice from you ? Has he ever been admitted to a greater familiarity than to carry your parcels or execute your orders ?"

"Why, Conrad, what singular questions ! Do you suppose my father's clerk would aspire to more than to clean my shoes ? Dismiss such thoughts."

"Why, then," continued Conrad, "does this person defy me so ? Why does he watch me ? Two days ago he met me in the garden-walk, and, as I passed, I raised my hat and wished him good-morning. He turned upon me like a tiger and berated me

soundly, called me an aristocrat—one who would scorn to do a gentle thing to a clod like him—a clod, indeed, he is. I thought the fellow crazy, and tried to soothe him, but he grew more abusive until, not being used to such treatment, I threatened him, when he came close up, as if to strike me. I raised my cane—

“Now, Louise, you know why I can not get well, for while a blow rests unreturned by me I can only pine and die. I raised my cane, as I said before, when Edgar Lane snatched it from my hand and struck me over my head, knocking me down. Can I get well until that insult is washed out?”

Louise leaped from the Persian rug on which she was sitting, her eyes all ablaze with that dangerous look Conrad had never before seen. Her face was flushed with anger, her lips closed, her teeth set firmly, and she reminded one of a beautiful tigress in her wrath. “He strike *you*!” she exclaimed, in a hoarse voice, “and still lives? He dare to raise his hand against my king, and not have that hand out off at once? Yes, wash out the insult with blood. I feel the blow, which was, no doubt, aimed at me. Your honored blood must not be sullied by such a churl as he. While he lives your honor will remain unsatisfied. Wash out his crime in blood. Oh! would I were a man! I’d scourge him upon his naked back with snakes and scorpions until he no longer bore the semblance of a human being. O Conrad! wash out that blow; you can not love me as I would have you love while that wretch lives.”

“Worst of all,” resumed Conrad, “the surgeon and Mr. May witnessed the act. They turned the corner as I fell, and saw the fellow walk coolly away. There are rules of honor by which I must be guided; this churl must not only strike me, but have the same chance to draw my blood as I have to draw his. It shall all be done in good time; but your anger does you credit, Louise, and shows how well you love me.”

“O my king! I love you so that the blow that villain gave you burns me like a rod of red-hot iron; it curdles the milk of human kindness in my veins. To see him dead, lying beneath my heel, I’d willingly be the one to strike the blow. Oh! that I had a dagger with a thousand blades, I’d strike him with them all. For every word he uttered, a dozen wounds should gape.”

At this moment one of the gardeners appeared with a note addressed to Louise. She knew the writing, and for a moment her eyes flashed; but she regained her coolness in a second, and opened

the note with a steady hand. "No answer," she said, and the messenger departed.

Louise calmly read the note, not a muscle of her face moving. It ran as follows :

"Louise, I've borne enough. This cruelty must cease. I've tried to speak to you, but you are for ever hanging around my bitter foe, Conrad. I go away to-morrow, but before I go I demand that you explain to me what all this means. Will you stand perjured before God and man? Meet me at nine o'clock at the foot of the garden near the western grotto. You must explain, or else, so help me God, I'll tell your father everything. That will end us both; he'll trample out our lives, but better this than that you should commit a crime. You know how well I'll keep my word. Don't fail me.

EDGAR."

Louise folded the note and put it quietly in her pocket. "How provoking these milliners are! they disappoint you so," she said. "I hoped to surprise you with a lovely dress at dinner. Thank heaven, my king, you are not a woman; you could not bear our griefs. But come," she continued, "it is past noon; you must go in to luncheon. I would gladly pass the whole day with you here, but it would not be well for you."

So saying, Louise helped Conrad to walk to the house, and, kissing his hand, she left him and went to her boudoir.

When she was alone, and could give vent to her feelings unseen, she was like a lioness that had lost her whelps. She locked the door and groveled on the floor; then she raged around the apartment, threw herself upon the sofa, and buried her face in the pillows, flooding the place with tears. Then she jumped up in utter despair, her hair disheveled, and her face pale as death. What a picture she would have made for a painter as she stood there! At last she exclaimed aloud: "I will go and meet him and plant a dagger in his heart. I'll wash out in blood the blow he gave Conrad."

She sat down before the glass to arrange her hair, and bedeck her person so that no traces of her rage could be seen.

All that day Louise kept her room, and not until the guests assembled at dinner did she go down.

After dinner the company strolled out on the lawn under the great trees, assorted as usual. Vere Saye had singled out Flossy,

and was sitting apart with her, listening to her guileless talk and laughing at her quaint remarks.

Louise and Conrad were on the porch—she all love and smiles, while he still harped upon the blow he had received.

At length the clock struck eight. "Come, my king," said Louise, "you must go in. I could linger here with you all night, but prudence says the night-air is too damp. The doctor says you must be in bed by eight."

Conrad rose obediently, and Louise took his face between her hands and kissed him passionately a dozen times, then led him in and bade him good-night.

She then flew up-stairs, put on a long cloak that concealed her person, and went down to wait in the porch until the clock should strike nine.

Meanwhile Conrad felt feverish. The air of his room seemed to suffocate him, and, unable to endure it, he took his hat, went into the garden, and walked to the western grotto.

"Here," he said, "the night-air can not hurt me; the coolness refreshes me already."

He plainly heard the loud-toned clock strike nine, and a man's step echoing on the walk. Next his quick ear detected the rustle of a woman's dress, and the quick, light movement of her feet.

The pair stopped close to the grotto. The man spoke, and Conrad at once recognized the voice of Edgar Lane.

"You've come at last," he said, "after treating me all these days with scorn. My threats have finally brought you to me."

"Your threats!" exclaimed the other; "I came to defy you, and dare you to do your worst!"

It was the voice of Louise Morton that Conrad recognized, and his blood froze in his veins. Louise here at night with Edgar Lane, and he using threats! "There is a mystery here that I must fathom," he mused; "my affianced wife can not meet a man in secret without my having a right to know the reason why."

The commander was not the only listener to this conversation. Another guest had sought the quiet of the grotto to smoke a cigar and meditate, but the two in conversation were too much absorbed to notice the aroma of the smoke.

"What means the close connection between you and this man Conrad?" demanded Edgar. "Do you think you can break your bonds with me? Do you think that I, who have loved you for so many years and have bound you to me with bands of steel, am

going to give you up because you are tired of my care-worn face, and fancy now a more exalted lover?"

"Vile, miserable creature!" exclaimed Louise; "do you think I have forgotten the foul means you used to tie me to your side? How you deceived me with your Jesuitical speeches—miserable pander to a faith which teaches that the end justifies the means? You fooled me with your sophistry until I was old enough to think for myself, and then I found you out. You deluded me by falsehood into a marriage which was no marriage at all, and you will find yourself circumvented in a manner you least expect."

"You are my wife before heaven. How often have you sworn, with your lips to mine, that you loved me alone!"

"Ah!" replied Louise, "that was when I was a fool, for I love you no longer."

"But you are my wife," continued Edgar, "and must bear your fate. When I return I shall confess everything to your father."

"How are you to prove the marriage, you poor fool?" inquired Louise.

"By Mr. Peel, the minister who married us."

"Mr. Peel, indeed!" returned Louise; "why, he has been dead these four months."

"By the minister's wife, then."

"She's paralyzed, and can not testify."

"By the two maids, then, who were witnesses to the ceremony; and then there's the register."

"Double-dyed fool! who fooled me in my youth and innocence, go find the witnesses. Both of them have left the country. My whole year's pocket-money went to send them home, and a yearly allowance will make them dumb for life. As for the register, if you can find my name in it I will agree to own up to our marriage. Do your worst, and live to have my father lash you off his grounds. He'll trample out your life when he finds what a villain you are. Go, fool! villain! clodpole!" hotly exclaimed Louise as she started swiftly toward the house, "I defy you!"

Edgar's first impulse was to throttle her where she stood, but she was too quick for him, and flew over the ground like a deer, so that before he had time to collect his thoughts she was within the house, and the door closed behind her.

Edgar was dumfounded, and for a moment could not move. The blood seemed to have stopped flowing through his veins; he grew dizzy, and grasped a small tree for support. But his weak-

ness was only momentary, for Edgar Lane was not one to be subdued by misfortune.

"And this is the woman," he gasped, "on whom I have lavished all my love, and for whom I would have poured out my heart's blood! This is the treatment she gives me. She has the heart of a viper, the sting of a hornet, and a heart filled with more iniquity than could be found in hell. She will meet her reward sooner or later. I will tear her image from my heart. Why should I risk my prospects in life for such a wretch? Let her have her Conrad, if she wants him."

The moon just began to appear over the tall trees. It was near its full, and by its light objects were almost as plainly visible as by day, except in the shadow of the woods, where everything remained in obscurity.

Edgar Lane, who held in his hand a small traveling-bag which contained his instructions from Mr. Morton and his letters of introduction, was about to quit the spot, when a tall figure, with livid face and hollow eyes, confronted him. It was Conrad, who, being in the grotto, had heard the conversation between Edgar and Louise. He would have spoken to make them aware of his presence, but their words froze his tongue to the roof of his mouth. He could not speak; a feeling like nightmare came over him. He was spell-bound. If the earth had opened and revealed to him his mother chained in the depths of Tartarus, and punished as a murderess, he could not have been more horrified. But when Louise had gone his senses returned to him.

"What are my griefs," he said, "compared to his?" and he stepped forth in Edgar Lane's path with the intention of accosting him.

Conrad was trembling from head to foot. What with one excitement and another, his frame was just giving way, his nerves were gone, and with this last blow he looked a perfect wreck.

"Who are you?" said Edgar Lane when he saw a figure in his path; but presently, recognizing Conrad, he exclaimed: "Ah! eavesdropper, is this the way the noble Conrad passes his time? What would the world say if it knew that a proud patrician was engaged in a dirty trick, such as common people would not descend to?"

Conrad did not heed the taunt. "Tell me," he said, with frenzied tones, "is all this true that I have heard, or is it some devilish dream? What I have overheard was accidental. I was in

the grotto for rest when you two came, and harrowed up my soul with your disclosures. Can they be true?"

"Can what be true?" replied Edgar Lane; "that I thought I had a wife, and find that I have none? What is that to you? Did you not hear her say that the witnesses to our marriage were both out of the way, and the register now blank where the record was written? What woman of your acquaintance not yet twenty years of age could do better than this? Wouldn't she shine in Hades? Why do you ask me if they are true? What was she to you, anyhow? How dare you speak to me until you have washed out the stain I put upon you only two days ago? Or is the blow of an inferior considered no insult at all, and he unworthy to measure swords with you? I'll warrant I'll give you blow for blow and point for point, and make you wish you'd never tampered with a wife of mine. But you can have her now—you are welcome to my leavings!"

"For God's sake, stop!" exclaimed Conrad, "and let misfortune kindle a fellow-feeling between us. How could I know that this woman was your wife when she consented five days ago to become mine? We were to be married as soon as I got well."

"Hasty wooing often brings bitter repentance," said Edgar; "he knows little of a treacherous woman's heart who thinks a few days' companionship will enable him to see into its depths. I've known Louise ten long years, and have learned more about her to-day than in all the time before."

"You taunt me with the blow you gave me," said Conrad. "I'll wash that out, you may depend. On your return a friend shall wait on you with all due form, and you shall have the benefit of the application of the rules of honor."

"This news makes me like you better," said Edgar. "I began to think chivalry was dead. I'll promise when we meet to make you remember Edgar Lane, or qualify you for a berth below ground six feet by two, where worms will feed on your aristocratic carcass. Go! I've talked with you enough, and leave the field to you. Take that woman to your bosom, for she'll be yours on any terms, either as wife or mistress, and I'll lay no claim to her. I only wish I could wash from my lips her hot kisses, the mere outpouring of vile passion."

So saying, Edgar Lane turned his back upon Conrad and walked toward the old oak, the path by which was a shorter cut to the steamboat-landing.

Conrad turned toward the house, determined to leave, if possible, in the eleven o'clock boat that night, although he had but a short time in which to make his preparations.

While these two were talking a figure stole from the eastern grotto and sought the shadow of the high arbor-vitæ hedge, where it was lost to view. No doubt this person had overheard all that had been said—some eavesdropper, who had no business there and carried away secrets involving the honor and happiness of a large circle, whose hospitality he had probably been enjoying ; but neither Conrad nor Edgar Lane saw any one.

When Conrad reached the house he passed from the porch into the parlor, intending to go to his room, take his traveling-bag, and escape at once from the accursed place without making any explanation.

As he entered the parlor a figure in a long, dark cloak rose from the sofa and advanced to meet him. It was Louise Morton.

"My king ! my king !" she exclaimed, "why are you here ? You should have been asleep long before this. What keeps you up so late ?" and she held out her arms as if to embrace him.

"Stand back !" cried Conrad, pushing her away. "How can honest eyes close in sleep when treachery taints the air ? Don't call me 'your king.' I refuse to reign with such a woman at my side !"

Louise stood aghast.

"I would have left this place without seeing you," continued Conrad, "but fate has thrown you in my way that I might tell you how you have wrecked my life. You, who told me your lips had never been pressed by anything but the leaves of the rose, where only lightest zephyrs ever rested. You have reveled in all the wantonness of love for years with Edgar Lane—the man whom you professed to me to hate."

"Oh ! hear me, Conrad," cried Louise, in agony ; "hear me on my bended knees. So help me God ! I never loved but you. That man beguiled my innocent youth to marry him. I knew not what love was. I see you know all, and must have overheard what passed to-night. I am free of him ; he has no claim on me. Oh ! do not cast me off, for if I fall in deep despair to the depths of sin you will be responsible for my crimes."

"They alone sin," said Conrad, "whose inclinations lead that way. The good never go wrong. A monitor within us points out the road to right ; the devil tempts us to follow the road to wrong.

You hardly require the devil's assistance, you already know so much. The serpent that tempted Eve never knew half so much as you. You would have cheated him out of his understanding. He'd have been as soft as clay in your stony hands. Shame! shame! that such a lovely casket should hold so vile a soul!"

"But hear me, Conrad!" cried Louise.

"Hear you for what? That I may be again misled by your siren voice, and have your arms around my neck and your false lips once more pressed to mine? No! go do penance for your crime; win back your lawful husband if you can, although you have destroyed all evidence of your marriage. But, I forget, he casts you off, and scorns the tie you were determined to break."

"Ah! Conrad," said Louise, "you are killing me. You can not hate me so much as to wish to see me die by my own hand. It was but an hour ago you said I was like the early steps of spring, and that my presence brought pleasure such as you never felt before. You said, 'Louise, how has God given me such bliss as this?' Have I changed in anything since then? Are not my eyes, and hair, and face, and lips the same?"

"Let me go," exclaimed Conrad, "and do not cling to me so. It's all in vain; the sea-weed might as well try to cling to the slippery rock amid the breakers as for you to try to cling to me, I loathe your falseness so. I leave you and this cursed place, and hope my eyes may never again see either."

She clung to him so desperately that he could not shake her off. He tried to unclasp her hands, which had fastened to him with a death-like grip. She sobbed like one bereft of home and all that makes life desirable, but Conrad was hard as flint.

"O Conrad!" she cried, "do not cast me off; let me serve you as your slave if you will not have me as your wife. I'll do the lowest thing you bid me. Whatever harm I may have done to Edgar, I've done no wrong to you, unless it be to love you with a madness beyond control. Say that what I have done is criminal, but my love for you contains one virtue that outweighs all my misdeeds. You have it in your power to redeem me; but throw me off and you cast me into despair. You might commit all the crimes in the world, and still I'd be true to you. I'd think the worst sin in you a virtuous act. Place me in the darkest dungeon, on bread and water, where I could never see the sunlight, and I would love you still; and if you came when years had blanched my hair and taken

from me every semblance of youth and beauty, I'd kiss your hand like a faithful dog."

She spoke in such impassioned tones that Conrad's heart grew weak. "Let me go now," he said; "I will take time to think. I am feeble and faint; I must rest."

She let him go. "Pray God you may forgive me," she said; "a good night's rest may cause you to see things in a different light. Go, my king! and may you, as you hope for mercy hereafter, be merciful to me now."

Conrad moved toward the door, leaving Louise upon her knees, her head bowed low, and a flood of tears flowing from her eyes.

CHAPTER XL

"MURDER MOST FOUL."

CONRAD soon reached his room, and there his resolution was quickly formed.

He took his traveling-bag, and, placing therein what things he required, went down-stairs, opened the French window leading to the porch, and walked as rapidly as his weakness would permit along the path toward the old oak-tree, the short cut to the steam-boat-landing.

The moon was sailing high up in the heavens, and the woods cast scarcely a shadow when he entered the house, but now the clouds were gathering in the southeast, and there were signs of a rapidly approaching storm. He quickened his pace to reach the landing ere the rain should overtake him, when, just as he reached a point about a hundred yards beyond the ancient oak, the most appalling cry he had ever listened to broke the stillness of the night. Then came shriek after shriek, until they were heard by every one in and about the villa, and every one rushed out of doors to see what it could mean.

Deville and Vere Saye were sitting at the time under the two great elms in front of the house—Deville with Mrs. Eton, and Vere Saye with Flossy, who was now his constant companion. Both gentlemen hastened in the direction of the oak, and as they neared the place they saw a dog, whose barking they had heard,

standing over a prostrate form. On reaching it they found it was that of a woman, and by the moonlight they recognized the features of Mary Samson. She was apparently lifeless, her clothes were torn, and her hands and face covered with blood.

Deville and Vere Saye raised her up and carried her some fifty paces to lay her on the bench under the old oak, when in doing so they discovered the body of a man lying on the ground, with blood flowing from a wound over the heart. They both had seen too much of death not to know that life had departed. Two gardeners came up at this moment, and, much to their surprise, Conrad joined them, traveling-bag in hand, coming from the opposite direction.

The dog, mistaking Conrad for a stranger, rushed at him with angry bark, and it was with difficulty he could be pacified. This circumstance, little noticed at the time, was commented on afterward.

In a few moments Mary Samson showed signs of returning consciousness, opening her eyes and looking wildly about her. "Oh ! take it away !" she cried, "take it away ! See, it's spouting blood ! I could not help him, I could not save him. Oh ! take me to my mother—I could not help—" here she burst into tears.

The people from the vicinity began to assemble, and soon Harry Morton and George May pushed through the crowd, anxious to learn what had happened.

As soon as Harry found that Mary was the object of attention he rushed up and took her in his arms, regardless of the presence of the lookers on. "My dear Mary," exclaimed he, "what does all this mean ? What has happened ? Tell me all, and I will see justice done you. By heaven ! I will make the life of him who has injured a hair of this dear head answer for his crime."

Mary laid her head on Harry's shoulder and wept bitterly. "Look, Harry," she said, "my hands are covered with blood. I tried to save his life, and pulled the dagger from his heart, when the blood spurted all over me. Oh ! take me home—away from all this ; there's a river of blood between us ; we must part for ever !"

"No," said Harry, "we shall never part. You need my care more than ever. Calm yourself, dearest, and let us go to the house. Here May," he said, "support her on one side, and I will on the other." They raised her gently up, and, she half walking, half carried, they proceeded to the villa.

Mr. and Mrs. Morton and Patch were on the porch when they arrived, Mrs. Morton pale and nervous, and Patch wringing her

hands and crying piteously when she saw the plight of her darling friend. Lights were brought, and Mary was placed on the wooden settee, when it was seen that her face, hands, and dress were covered with blood. The skirts left trails of it on the boards, and the settee was soon stained with it.

"Go for Dr. Preston as quickly as possible," said Mrs. Morton to one of the servants, who departed at once. "The child must be seriously wounded, or where would all this blood come from?"

"Oh! no, Mrs. Morton," said Mary, "I am not wounded; but take me home to mother—I'll never leave her again."

"Don't talk that way, darling," said Harry. "You are not to blame for all this. You have done no wrong. You are safe now, among your friends. Don't say things that may be misconstrued; trust to your own Harry and your friends to take care of you."

Mr. Morton, who overheard these affectionate expressions, frowned sternly. "Has it come to this already?" he said to himself. "If so, my cup is full. This must be put a stop to."

Just then Vere Saye came up, took Mr. Morton aside, and told him all that had happened at the oak: how they had found Mary near the tree, with the dog guarding her; how they had found Edgar Lane's body struck through the heart with a dagger; and how Commander Conrad, talking incoherently, had appeared upon the ground with a traveling-bag in his hand, although everybody supposed him to be in bed.

No one as yet could take in the situation.

We must go back a little to explain some things that had a great bearing on the events we have related.

When Conrad rushed from the presence of Louise Morton he left her on her knees, her head bowed in agony of mind. As the door closed behind him she raised her eyes. "Ah!" she said, "this is a good omen; he has left me something of his to cherish." As she spoke she raised from the floor a white handkerchief which Conrad had dropped. "I'll keep it till my death," she said, and kissed it repeatedly. She could not bear the suspense of waiting till the morrow. "I will go once more to him," she said. "I will go to his room, and in the light, where he can see this agony on my face, he will see how I love him, and must forgive me."

Louise proceeded noiselessly up-stairs till she reached the door of Conrad's room. What mattered it to her if she exhibited a want of delicacy in visiting his room alone at that hour of the night! She thought not of that. "I am his slave," she said to

herself. "I am Conrad's on any terms he may desire. I can not lose him, cost what it may."

She pushed the door open. The room was empty, but a candle burned on the table. She saw in an instant that his hand-bag was gone, and that all the toilet articles had been removed.

His trunk was strapped, with his traveling-coat on top, and marked with a card, on which was written, "To be sent to the Curlew by the next boat." Worst of all, there was a note upon the bureau hurriedly written and addressed to herself. He had not paid her the courtesy to seal it, although there were sealing-wax and candle on the table. He evidently had not cared who read it.

Louise read the note, eagerly scanning the hurriedly written lines. The writing was scarcely legible, so tremulous was his hand, but she managed to decipher it even through her blinding tears.

"You think to keep me as your lover, even while you are stained with crimes, shameless woman, vilest of the vile! I hate and despise you. Lay none of your future sins at my door; you'll gravitate to them as readily as the needle to the pole. I marry you! What a misfortune that would be! She whom I wed must be as opposite to you as day is to night. I have already torn your image from my heart, and when I meet some pure woman that I am sure I can love and respect, I'll forget in her presence the degradation I suffered when thrown by accident with you. CONRAD."

As Louise read this note her tears dried up, and that cold, steel look that we have so often remarked came into her eyes.

She drew herself up, threw back her beautiful head, and, as she finished reading, dropped her hand by her side with the letter in it. She gazed steadily before her, as if at something a long way off, and never looked handsomer than at that moment. But it was the beauty of the fallen angel when driven out of heaven into hell. She bore on her face the concentrated rage of a dozen tigresses. She folded the note carefully and put it in her bosom. "I'll not forget a word," she said; "'twill sharpen my revenge. I'll read it night and morning until it is graven on my heart. He scorns me, does he? I'll spend my life devising deviltry for his punishment. I'll pray to God to let me live to crush him. I'll let him know what woman's unrequited love is when turned to hate. The world is not so large but I can find him out. He shall press no other woman to his heart, or, if he does, her love shall change to gall.

I'll hang about his life like some dark cloud, and burst upon his head when he least expects it."

With these words she closed the door and went down-stairs.

Being in the back of the house, Louise did not hear the screams from the direction of the Hawks' Throne, and hence knew nothing of the excitement that prevailed. She went out on the porch to cool her fevered brow in the night-air. There she saw lights flitting about the garden and down toward the great oak. She asked of a gardener running by what was the matter.

"Dreadful things!" replied the man as he hurried on. "Miss Samson nearly killed, and Mr. Lane murdered."

Her heart stood still; her hair stood on end. She quivered in every limb, but not with sympathy for Edgar Lane. "God in heaven!" she exclaimed, "why did not this occur three hours ago, and leave me free? Why was my cup of joy dashed from my lips, and a poisoned chalice placed there instead? Or is there no God, but only a devil, whose chief delight is to make misery for the human race? Does the devil spend his time devising ways and means to hurt the female sex because of the punishment his crime with Eve subjected him to? for I've often been told that God chained him in hell a hundred thousand years, his drink hot blood, his food only newts and toads, since which he has come to earth and is worse than ever. But I'll woo him as woman never wooed devil before, if he'll only give me my revenge. Satan, I'll pray to you. I'll have no other God but you if you will but give me my revenge!"

The words were no sooner uttered than a flash of lightning came from the heavy black clouds that were whirling through the air, and a clap of thunder, which sounded like the firing of a thousand cannon, followed. Flash succeeded flash, and peals were heard reverberating away off through the Catskills like the echoes of a battle when the fight is receding. Then all was still.

The lightning left its mark; a bolt had struck one of the grand old elms and shattered it to its roots.

Louise felt as if the devil had answered her impious prayer, and she rejoiced as if heaven had smiled upon her. She heeded not the approaching rain, but fairly flew over the ground toward the old oak, for she longed to look upon the face of the man whom once she thought she loved, but whom she hated, even though his eyes were closed in death. She wanted to gaze upon his dead face and see the dagger in his body.

As she sped along a thought struck her, and soon she was at the

oak, the crowd standing around looking gloomily on the dead and speculating as to why the deed was done.

Louise pushed through the throng and stood over the dead body, the open eyes staring at her with glassy look, and the face without a particle of color.

Louise's heart felt glad as she gazed upon it. She peered closely into the eyes to see if there was any sign of life, and, although she had never seen a lifeless body before, she felt that this was death.

"Who committed this deed?" she inquired of one of the bystanders. "Who killed this man?"

"No one knows," was the reply. Then, turning around, she saw Conrad leaning against a rock beneath the branches of the oak. He seemed lost in thought, was deadly pale, and his eyes were fixed upon the bloody corpse as if he were fascinated. He looked ten years older than when Louise saw him an hour before.

She walked straight up to him and touched his arm. He looked around and shuddered when he saw her. "You here?" he said; "the sight of you offends me. If you have no decency, assume it for the time; this is no place for a woman."

"Yes," said Louise, "I come to you for the last time. That man's death removes all barriers between us. I was his lawful wife—there was no crime in that. I loved you when I was a wife. Hundreds have done the same thing and were not cast off. I never loved him; what matters it what our relations were? It's but a foolish sentiment that governs you. Dismiss it, and we will be happier than the angels in heaven; cherish it, and your life will be a hell. Throw me off, and I denounce you; take me to your heart once more, and I'll conceal the crime your hand has committed."

She spoke these words as calmly as if she were talking of some ordinary event.

Conrad started from her as if she had been some venomous reptile, his eyes glaring as if he could slay her where she stood. "I commit this crime?" he cried. "Is that the way you mean to wreak your vengeance upon me? What if I tell the story of your life? what would you have to say to that?"

"No one would believe you," she answered, with a bitter laugh; "it is too improbable. Besides, you have no proofs. I can make out a better tale than you can. I can make you appear the veriest villain living. You have reviled me as woman was never reviled before—all because I loved you to madness; yet I'll forgive all if you'll but take me back again, and will be your slave till death."

"Never!" he exclaimed; "begone! I despise you and your threats. Trouble me no more, and do your worst; I'll have naught to do with you."

"Then I shall denounce you!" said Louise, and she moved swiftly toward the house.

As she went her foot struck against something; she stooped and picked up a bloody dagger of curious shape. She still carried in her dress-pocket the handkerchief Conrad had dropped. She wrapped the bloody dagger in it, and then went home, her heart exulting over the evidence the devil or luck had put in her hands against her late lover. She went to her room and hid the dagger in a secret drawer.

A tent was brought from the house and erected under the old oak, and the dead body placed therein to await the arrival of the coroner. A watch was set, and lanterns hung to the lower branches of the oak.

It was past the hour for Conrad to proceed to the steamboat-landing when he gave his answer to Louise Morton. The Rip Van Winkle had sped upon her way half an hour before. Conrad was glad he had not gone in the steamer, for it would have looked as if he had fled after committing a crime, since Louise threatened to denounce him. He had no other place to go, and slowly took his way back to the house and his room.

When Dr. Preston arrived at the villa, Mary was still lying upon the sofa. She had had several fainting-fits, and the family were much alarmed about her.

The doctor felt her pulse and had more lights brought out on the porch, but, when he got a good view of her countenance, he looked puzzled. "I've seen this face before," he said; "this is Miss Gale, Mr. Harry, is it not—the young lady of the steamboat adventure? I suppose, of course," said he to Mr. and Mrs. Morton, "that Harry told you all about that affair."

Mr. Morton jumped from his chair and rushed forward. "Miss Gale, did you say? Why, this is Miss Samson, the instructress of our daughters." His face and that of Mrs. Morton turned very pale.

"No," said the doctor, "this is certainly Miss Gale; is not that the name she gave us, Harry?"

"No," said Harry, "we saw the name 'Mary Gale' upon her traveling-bag, and we assumed that her name was Gale, which we had no right to do. She calls herself Miss Samson, and is so introduced here by the most respectable people."

"Never mind what her name may be," said the old physician, "she is a lovely creature, and requires our utmost care and attention. The poor child has been terribly unnerved. Where does all this blood on her clothes come from?"

The doctor was then informed of the tragedy that had taken place; how Edgar Lane had been killed by some person unknown, and Miss Samson found lying on the ground, a short distance from the dead body, covered with blood, and her clothing much torn.

When the doctor heard the story he shook his head. "I don't know anything about the circumstances, but I'll stake my life that this sweet girl is innocent of any wrong. I know too much of human nature, and am too good a judge of faces and character, to be deceived."

"Can you account, sir," said Mr. Morton, in an angry, agitated voice, "for this young woman's presenting herself here under an assumed name? I call her an impostor. We can not tell what crimes she has committed, or what was her object in coming here."

Dr. Preston looked at him in astonishment, and started back on seeing Mr. Morton's livid face, and eyes almost starting from their sockets, while, as he gesticulated, the almost palsied hands were nervously clutching at the buttons of his coat. He looked far more like a criminal than the prostrate girl.

"How can you undertake," said the doctor, "to judge of a crime or who commits it? Who knows half the time who is the criminal and who is not? The greatest sinners are often in the highest places; 'judge not lest ye be judged.'" The doctor said this with no particular meaning, but the thrust went home, and Mr. Morton staggered away and shut himself up in the library.

"Now," said the doctor, "get an old drugget and wrap the young lady in it; carry her up-stairs, undress her, cleanse her of all the blood, and put her to bed. All she wants is rest and kind attention, and, as soon as she can be moved, restore her to her friends, for no house is a place for one so young where the master of the establishment pronounces her an impostor without, it seems, knowing anything of the case. As far as my professional services are concerned, they shall not be charged to this house; they will be given gratuitously. And I'll take occasion to say here, that, if Mr. Morton thinks proper to take exception to my remarks, he can send for Dr. Lancet to attend his family."

At this moment the doctor felt a light hand laid on his arm, and, turning around, beheld the pale face of Mrs. Morton, her

large, soft eyes looking pleadingly into his. "Do I look like one," she said, "to neglect this poor child, who deserves all my sympathy, and who has endeared herself to me in a thousand ways? I know she is not an impostor, but is to me a second daughter. I feel that some tie connects us, but can not tell what it is. I only know her presence here has brought a joy to my soul it has not known for years."

"There speaks the sweet, sympathetic woman!" said Dr. Preston. "Men are brutally selfish, and nine times out of ten condemn without taking time to consider. They are all more or less animals at heart, and should never be allowed to serve on a jury. Women, madam, would make far better jurymen—excuse the Irish bull—and justice would be more surely dealt out. My dear madam, I would trust *you* with the dearest child I had on earth; what more can I say?"

"But do not condemn my husband before you hear him," said Mrs. Morton. "He came home yesterday evening, from a long journey, much exhausted, and for three or four hours was out of his mind, full of queer fancies, and unable to sleep."

"Ah!" said the doctor, "insomnia—that's bad; mustard-bath on going to bed, a hot whisky-toddy, and warm bricks to his feet!"

"He forgot all about his fancies after an hour's rest," continued Mrs. Morton, "and did not return to the subject until he saw this young lady again this evening. Yesterday evening the sight of her agitated him very much. I beg of you, doctor, to see him before you go."

"As soon as Miss Samson is in bed," said the doctor, "give her this anodyne, and I will see her early to-morrow. As to your husband, the treatment I have indicated will suffice for the present. Now get every one to bed, and have the house kept perfectly quiet."

The last thing Deville and Vere Saye did was to call and inquire after Miss Samson. They were both distressed to see the young girl the victim of such peculiar and disagreeable circumstances. "I don't know," said Vere Saye, "that I ever met any one whose innocence and beauty so won my regard. I look upon her as one whom I would like to have as a sweet sister. She is not one with whom I could fall in love; somehow she seems too near to me."

"I suppose that is the way all men feel toward her," said Deville; "I am sure I do—she is so pure in heart and angelic in looks and disposition! Her eyes remind me constantly of my

mother's eyes as she leaned over me at night to quiet me to sleep ; there was a magnetism in those dear eyes better than any anodyne."

"I suppose," said Vere Saye, "that all mothers have done the same thing since the days of Eve. I have had the same experience. Take my word for it, Deville, one who passes a day of his manhood without remembering his mother's eyes as they looked to him in youth has no heart. Of all the features of the human face, the eyes alone express the character of the soul."

"You love to look into pretty eyes, don't you?" said Deville. "Do you know, Vere Saye, that I have thought you, until the last few days, a cold, calculating, selfish man ; but I think better of you now. There is a chord in every human soul which, if touched by the master-hand, will be sure in due time to give forth the music of love. I pity the man that has no such music in his soul. Every heart should feel the touch of love once at least in a life-time, even though it break in the operation. What a stupid life this would be if we had to sail always on some smooth lake without a ripple, instead of rushing along on the turbid waves of life, struggling with its storms, and feeling the immensity of creation ! These struggles with the storms and waves of life teach us to love the gentle brooks with their soft murmur, as they glide onward into the sea, and to pity them for the dangers to which they are running. I have struggled so with heart-aches and rough treatment that I long to sit down by the side of some silent stream and listen for ever to its murmuring music. The trouble is with me, I'm no judge of eyes ; they always deceive. You have lately been looking into a pair that indicate a loving heart."

"Ah !" replied Vere Saye, starting, "you mean Flossy's eyes ! Well, yes ; and a prettier pair never beamed upon a rough fellow like myself. I can't tell you yet what my feelings are in regard to Flossy's eyes. They are beautiful—but I don't like her father. I think him an old scamp. If he were out of the way—well, I don't know what might happen ; but Carrolton would be a hard father-in-law to be hanging on to one."

"But," said Deville, "you don't intend to marry him ; it's his daughter you are thinking of."

"Yes," said Vere Saye, thoughtfully, "but—" Here he stopped.

"Look here, Vere Saye," said Deville, "you once asked for my friendship ; you would stand a poor chance of securing it if you should ever do anything to bring a pang to that sweet girl's heart."

I love Flossy Carrolton as I would a sister, and would never forgive any man who attempted to injure her."

Vere Saye seized Deville's hand and shook it warmly. "Thank you," he said, "for these sentiments. When I do aught to bring a tear to sweet Flossy's eye or a pang to her heart, may heaven forsake me! But keep my secret; don't tell any one that Vere Saye—that great, overgrown, unsympathetic, cold, unromantic, phlegmatic wretch—has put his heart in little Flossy's keeping; but there it is as sure as a gun! and if she is not a sweet little tyrant, I never met one."

"Ah!" said Deville, "then I shall go to bed and sleep happily, for if my own river does not run as smoothly as I could wish, I desire to see those I love made happy. And now good-night, for here our roads diverge," and they parted, each to his separate inn.

When Vere Saye reached his bedroom he found it was an hour past midnight. The time had slipped away so rapidly amid the exciting events at Morton villa that he had not noticed its flight. He did not calculate on seeing Chic that night, and was about closing the window, when a hand-bag was thrown into the room, and Chic followed from the tree that stood by the window.

"Well, Chic," said Vere Saye, "where have you been all this evening? What does this hand-bag mean?"

"First and foremost, sir," said Chic, "I have been spending the evening with the royal fish-hawks at Hawks' Throne, and had I been so minded I might have supped on a young salmon, albeit it was raw, but I was not hungry, and preferred a flow of reason and a feast of soul with the old sovereign who has his throne on the topmost branch of that venerable oak, where a man is well repaid for spending the evening. O sir! you would have given a thousand dollars to have seen and heard all that I did to-night."

"What is the difference, Chic?" said Vere Saye. "I shall hear and see it all through you. Tell me what you saw."

"I could not tell you all I saw while I was up that tree in chronological order," said Chic, "so I got one of the hawks, who is head scribe, to write it down for me in his language on a large oak-leaf. Here is the original leaf, and this manuscript is a literal translation of the document, which I have been two hours in transcribing. Those hawks are the most intelligent birds I ever met, and have treated me with unusual consideration.

"I got along very well, had a fine opportunity to study hawk life, and drawing comparisons between their mode of life and our

own. The motto which is stuck up over every hawk's nest is an excellent one—'What fools these mortals be !' and their criticisms on the human race are undoubtedly just. I hope to spend a great deal of my time among them.

"As for that leather bag, I am what might be called a picker-up of unconsidered trifles. I saw that bag, from the top of the Hawks' Throne, lying on the ground where Mr. Edgar Lane dropped it when he was struck. I said to the old scribe hawk, with whom I was talking at the time, 'Excuse me a minute,' and I slipped down and picked it up, and was back again up the tree in a jiffy. No one saw me but the dog Jupiter, and he won't tell. As I *accidentally* happened to overhear a conversation between Mr. Edgar Lane and Mr. Morton, I think this bag may contain something to gratify a person that is as curious as you are about other people's affairs."

"Don't be cheeky, Chic," said Vere Saye ; "but how came you to hear this conversation ?"

"Why, sir," replied Chic, "when I see two persons talking together confidentially I say to myself, 'There's some mystery there ; I must fathom it.' I passed the library-window, and saw those two with their heads together. I popped in, in a manner peculiar to myself, and I heard a good deal you'd like to know, and which I will tell you to-morrow, or any other time you are ready to listen. That bag contains the key to all the conversation, and that and my memorandum of events while in the Hawks' Throne will take you all night to get through with. If you please, sir, I'll go now, for I'm sleepy."

"One moment, Chic," said Vere Saye ; "did you see the blow struck ?"

"I did, sir," replied Chic.

"Do you know who did it ?" said Vere Saye.

"Perhaps I do, sir, perhaps I don't. I will tell you when I find the dagger, which I will do at daylight this morning."

"Tell me again," said Vere Saye, "is Miss Samson in any way implicated in this affair ?"

"No oranges grow on potato-vines," said Chic. "Do angels have anything to do with Satan's transactions ? No, sir ; she was coming from Falcon Rock, overhanging the river, where she'd been looking at the moon rise, with the dog Jupiter to keep her company, for she knows that dog's got more sense than half the men, begging your honor's pardon. No, sir, she's all right. She saw the man

fall, and ran and pulled the dagger from his heart and then fainted on the body. The dog then pulled her away, and that's why her dress was so torn."

"Thank heaven!" said Vere Saye. "Be ready to give that evidence, Chic. Now you may go," and Chic disappeared through the window as usual.

Then Vere Saye took from his desk a bunch of keys and opened the bag, in which he found letters of introduction to Stephen Lindsay, attorney-at-law, Boston, and a letter with no name signed, which read as follows:

"You will, on your arrival in Boston, deliver your letters of introduction to Mr. Lindsay, and state to him that it is your desire to study law with him and become familiar with the statutes of Massachusetts; that you are willing to pay his price and assist him in his duties. No man will refuse such an offer. When an opportunity offers, look over his papers, and if you find any that relate to one Agnes Gale and her infant daughter Mary, copy them and send them to me. He may become confidential with you after awhile in regard to these persons and tell you what I want to know—viz., their present place of residence if they are still alive. Find out if they escaped the burning of the Gale house in 1799.

"When you get an opportunity, ask leave of absence and go to Manchester, Massachusetts, and find out all about the Gale family from the residents of the town. Whenever letters come, make a note of the post-mark, and if any are lying about, note the contents and signature if you can do so unobserved. It is of the greatest importance that I should obtain full information of these people. Commit this paper to memory and then destroy it."

There was no signature or direction to this communication, or anything by which the paper could be brought home to any one. There was nothing else of importance in the bag except a roll of bank-bills amounting to a thousand dollars.

"A pretty kettle of fish!" said Vere Saye; "and this Mary Gale seems to be as much an object of interest to another man as to me. Well, at length I have a clew—Mr. Lindsay, of Boston—and I will not lose it."

Vere Saye returned all the articles to the bag and locked it in his trunk, put Chic's manuscript in his desk, and then retired to rest.

By one o'clock everything was quiet at Morton villa. Mary Samson had taken the anodyne prescribed by the doctor, and had

fallen into a sweet slumber. Miss Bane was left in charge of the patient, though Patch insisted on sleeping in the room with her.

Patch propped herself up in an easy-chair, and never took her eyes off her friend all night until daylight, when, tired with watching, she fell asleep.

Mrs. Morton had not seen her husband since he left the porch, after receiving the well-merited rebuke of Dr. Preston. When the clock struck two she arose from the sofa—where she had thrown herself to wait for him—and went down to the library, where she felt sure she would find him.

Mr. Morton sat at a table, his head resting on his hands, and when his wife touched him and said, "Husband, dear!" he started up and presented a dreadful-looking face, aged in appearance five years within the last two hours.

"Great heavens, husband!" said Mrs. Morton, "are you ill? Let me send for the doctor."

"No! no!" he exclaimed; "Dr. Preston can not administer to my ailments; they are down in the soul, far beyond human aid. Eleanor, our sins are sure to find us out. I feel that I shall be overtaken with calamity sooner or later, and my heart aches to think what you will have to suffer through me, stripped of wealth and all that makes life endurable.

"Poor husband!" she said, taking his head on her bosom, "why these queer fancies? You are not well; the hallucinations that oppressed you before have come over you again. The excitements of the day have been too much for you—first, the horrible murder of your secretary, then the condition of that poor girl when she was brought to the house, and the cruel mystery of the whole affair, is enough to upset a mind already overtaxed. Go to bed, dear husband, and sleep it off; you will have a great deal to go through with to-morrow. Go and get some sleep."

"I wish," said Mr. Morton, looking intently at his wife, "it had been she instead of Edgar Lane."

"She!" exclaimed Mrs. Morton. "Whom do you mean? not Mary Samson?" and she looked horrified.

"Yes, Mary Samson, or Mary Gale, or whoever she is," he replied, doggedly.

"Husband!" said Mrs. Morton, starting up and looking earnestly in his face, "what does this mystery mean? Why do you hate this sweet girl, whom I so love? Suppose her name is Gale; the association of names should make her more dear to us. Oh!

would to God she were the sweet child that perished in the flames, although I could not love her more than I do. There is something about her that endears her to me more and more every day."

"You will work yourself up into such an enthusiasm for this girl," said he, "that in the end you will be ready to sacrifice me for her."

"Sacrifice you!" exclaimed Mrs. Morton, in wonder. "Oh, my dear husband! come to bed; you would not talk so if you were yourself. I would sacrifice everything in life for you."

"Would you, indeed, Eleanor?" he said, snatching her hand and looking earnestly in her face. "Would you cling to me if all the world deserted me and I was accused of crimes? Would you be willing to descend with me from our high estate and live in some quiet nook, knowing no one and unknown ourselves, where I might expiate my offenses against God and man? But how could I ever offer atonement for what I have done to you?"

Mrs. Morton was more than ever convinced that her husband's mind was unsettled, and the tears streamed down her cheeks, while her sobs almost choked her. She could not answer him at once.

"Tell me," he said, fiercely, "would you do all this for me?"

She had to say something to quiet him; she wanted to get him up-stairs to bed. She put her arms around his neck and kissed him. "My own darling husband!" she said, "I would do ten thousand times more for you than you have mentioned. I would cling to you through crimes, misfortunes, and sickness, or whatever else might happen, until death; and you will find me the same loving wife in adversity that you have found me in prosperity. Nay, more, if adversity overtook you I should feel it not only a duty but a pleasure to devote all my attention to you. The world's fashions have kept you away from me too much. If we should ever be driven, by what you call adversity, to live in a more humble sphere, I should welcome it with pleasure, for I should then have you all to myself. You have worn yourself out in your search for wealth, and wear more gray hairs than your age justifies. Your form is bowed more than it should be, and your face has long borne a careworn look that has often made my heart ache."

"Have you observed that?" he said, anxiously. "I thought it was only known to myself—but if you only knew— Tell me one thing more, Eleanor: will you never divulge that mystery we have between us? for as long as that is known to us only, I am safe. Until that is known nothing can be brought against me."

"I promise all you ask," said Mrs. Morton, still sobbing, "but ah! dear husband, I wish I could understand the object of that great mystery. You gave me reasons that satisfied me at the time, and I have always obliged you as a loving and dutiful wife should, and I shall do so while life is given to me. Now come with me and seek the repose you need."

"I will be content," said he, "to abide the issue under your promises, for then I know that nothing can affect me. You are my guardian angel, and ever have been. I will go with you, but not, I fear, to sleep, for my mind is ill at ease."

They went up-stairs, where his wife gave him an anodyne, and he soon fell into a deep slumber. But Mrs. Morton did not close her eyes until daylight began to stream through her window-shutters. She lay thinking of things that occurred years before, when she and her husband were young. She thought strange of them then, and somehow she connected them in her mind with things that were happening now. She could not help thoughts creeping into her mind that made her shudder, but she brushed them away. "Oh, no! not that," she said; "that could not be! that could not be! Shame on my heart for harboring such ideas." And, worn out, she at last dropped asleep.

CHAPTER XLL

THE INQUEST.

THE morning after the murder the coroner notified the inhabitants of Morton villa that a jury would be impaneled to meet under the old oak at eleven o'clock. All the members of the household were subpoenaed to appear, also Mr. Deville, Vere Saye, Mary, Dr. Preston, and every one whom it was thought could know anything about the tragedy.

At the appointed hour the jury met, the royal hawks looking from above with much apparent curiosity at the proceedings, while Chic sat among them until his time came to be questioned. Chic always combined pleasure with business.

Dr. Preston was first called upon to make a post-mortem examination. The body had been left just as it was found; the clothes had not been touched. The latter were saturated with blood, and

a thick pool of blood lay on the ground, having run through the cracks of the door on which the body was placed.

Dr. Preston opened the coat of the deceased, laid bare the breast, and proceeded to examine the wound.

There was not much to be said. The blow had been struck with a dagger that made a wide and gaping wound. The weapon passed through the center of the heart, coming out at the back, and no doubt causing instant death. It must have been struck by one having considerable strength of arm.

Then the witnesses were examined. Deville and Vere Saye stated what we already know, and the gardeners gave similar testimony.

Harry Morton and George May could only state that they came some time after the crowd had assembled, and saw how the body was lying.

Mr. Morton stated that Edgar Lane left him at nine o'clock, with instructions to travel to the eastward on business of importance; that when he left the library Edgar had his hand-bag with him with valuable papers, and a thousand dollars in fifty-dollar notes, of which he had the numbers. Neither bag nor contents had yet been seen by any one. Lane was too particular a man to neglect a trust, and he had been told not to let the bag go out of his sight at any time, so he must have had it with him when killed.

Mr. Morton was pale, his voice trembled, and his hands twitched nervously as he gave his evidence; this was deemed extraordinary, since Mr. Morton was usually so cool and collected.

Chic was next called to the stand, and testified that he was sitting in the branches of the old oak, learning wisdom from the royal birds, when he saw Miss Samson and Jupiter, the dog, come down the walk and past the tree, going toward what is called the Falcon Rock, where the royal birds sit watching all day long for fish in the Hudson.

This was about eight o'clock, and it was yet light enough for Chic to see her sitting upon the rock, with the dog at her side. When the moon rose, Chic said it was almost as light as day, and he noticed a man at about half-past nine o'clock coming from the direction of the villa-garden, carrying a bag in his right hand, and at the same time he saw Miss Samson coming from the Falcon Rock toward the Hawks' Throne. He recognized the person with the bag as Mr. Edgar Lane. When Mr. Lane reached the tree, and Miss Samson was about fifty yards from it, a man whom he had not seen before jumped from behind the oak and struck Mr. Lane,

who fell and never moved again. The man disappeared so suddenly that Chic could not identify him.

When Miss Samson saw Lane fall, Chic continued, she ran forward, seized the dagger by the handle, drew it from the wound, and threw it away. She then fainted, and fell upon the body, when the dog pulled her away, dragging her some fifty feet, which accounted for her clothes being torn.

Chic was closely cross-questioned, but he seemed disposed to talk about the hawks, and what they said to him.

In the course of the cross-examination Chic stated that while Vere Saye and Deville were moving Miss Samson to the seat under the tree, Commander Conrad made his appearance, whence he did not know; that he carried a hand-bag similar to that of Edgar Lane; that he looked intently for some time at the body and seemed dazed; that he then began looking around the ground as if hunting for something, but, failing in his search, resumed his gaze on the dead body.

Then Conrad was called. He looked pale, and trembled with weakness. He gave his evidence so incoherently that no one knew what to make of it. The jury gathered from his remarks that he had taken his hand-bag at about half-past nine to go to the boat; that when just below the brow of the hill overhanging the river he heard the screams of a woman, sounding as if they came from across the river, but as he came to the top of the bank he saw people running toward the tree and joined them. He found Edgar Lane lying dead on the ground, and stood for some time looking at him.

"What were you hunting for when looking about the ground?" asked one of the jurors.

"I am not aware that I did anything of the kind," answered Conrad, irritably.

"Did the family know that you were going away?"

"No," replied Conrad; "it was not necessary that they should."

At this point every one looked surprised. No one knew that Conrad intended going to New York. He was so feeble that his friends were astonished that he was able to walk to the river. They exchanged looks of astonishment.

Mr. Morton whispered something to the coroner, and the latter took from his pocket a paper, saying, "I have a list of questions some one has sent me anonymously, to which I was disposed to pay no attention, but the evidence has taken such a course that I feel

bound to use the paper. Let me ask you, Commander Conrad, did you know Mr. Lane personally ? ”

“ I can’t say I did,” he replied, “ though I have spoken to him, and knew him by sight.”

“ Had you ever a difficulty with him ? ” asked the coroner.

“ I don’t see what that has to do with this matter,” he said, drawing himself up proudly.

“ Nevertheless,” said the coroner, “ please answer the question.”

“ Well, then,” said Conrad, “ I did have a difficulty with him.”

“ Will you state the nature of the difficulty ? ”

“ Am I,” said Conrad, with irritation, “ to tell my private affairs to the public ; that I, a sick man, was knocked down by Edgar Lane and could not resent it ? ”

At this moment George May, with a flushed countenance, approached the coroner. “ Mr. Coroner,” said he, “ this is very unjust to Commander Conrad, who is in no condition to answer questions before a coroner’s jury. He ought to be in bed at this moment, and is just recovering from a dangerous illness. No doubt his medical attendant is surprised to see him here. He should be either allowed to retire or to have counsel, for this examination seems to me in the nature of a trial. Since you have come prepared with papers and written questions to ask the gentleman, and as the examination, or trial, seems likely to be prolonged, I beg leave to offer myself as Commander Conrad’s counsel. I advise him not to answer questions that may appear to criminate him—not that any harm can come to him from this investigation, for I will pledge my life he knows nothing about the murder. I saw the insult Lane gave him. It was uncalled for and brutal ; only a coward would have acted so toward a sick and helpless man.”

“ Gently, sir, gently,” said the coroner ; “ the man is dead and can not answer you. There are always two sides to a story, and this dead man can’t tell his. But you are at liberty to act as counsel for Commander Conrad, and he can have a chair, as he seems feeble. I have no desire to do more than my duty.”

“ Can I have pen, ink, paper, and a table ? ” asked May.

“ You can have what you desire,” said the coroner, and the articles were brought.

“ As you allow me,” said May, “ to act as counsel, I must take the privileges of a lawyer and do all I can to protect my client from questions and answers that would tend to criminate him, also to cross-question those who may give evidence against him.”

"As far as it can be done consistently with the law," replied the coroner, "and without running into a regular trial, you shall be gratified; but I must tell you there are serious charges against Commander Conrad."

"Against me!" exclaimed Conrad, rising indignantly.

"Sit down, my friend," said George May, "and answer nothing that does not go through me. Go on, Mr. Coroner."

"Have you ever made threats against Edgar Lane—that you would wash out the insult with his blood?"

"My client declines answering that question," said May.

"How long," said the coroner, "did you follow him after leaving the house?"

Conrad, after consulting with May, answered, "In half an hour."

"Did you know he was going to the boat?"

"Yes."

"Where did you see Mr. Lane that evening? Did you talk with him, and what was the subject of the conversation?"

"I decline to answer," said Conrad.

"Did you use harsh language to him then?"

"No," said Conrad; "on the contrary, he was very abusive to me. I tried to conciliate him."

"Was this after he struck you?"

Conrad turned crimson. The idea that Lane had died without giving him satisfaction was gall and wormwood to him, but he recovered himself and answered,

"Yes."

The gentlemen present looked at each other in astonishment; none of them had ever heard of this difficulty.

"May I ask," said the coroner, "why you submitted to his abuse, and why you tried to conciliate him?"

"Because he was under the impression that I had done him an injury, and I believed I had done so unintentionally."

"What was the nature of the injury?" was the next question.

"I decline to answer," said Conrad.

"Did you challenge Edgar Lane?"

"I told him when I was able to meet him a friend of mine would call upon him."

"What was his answer to that?"

"That he would be delighted to meet me, and that it would afford him great pleasure to lay me out in ground six feet by two. He was very vindictive in his manner."

"Where did you go when you left him, and had you any intention of leaving the house at that time?"

"I went directly to the house, with the intention of going at once to New York, if I could reach the landing in time."

"Did you go to bid the family farewell?" asked the coroner.

"No; I went to get my hand-bag and lock my trunk, leaving written directions where the trunk should be sent."

"Is it usual for a gentleman, after passing some days at another's house, to go off in that unceremonious way?"

"Circumstances justified my action," said Conrad.

"What were those circumstances?"

"I decline to answer."

The coroner then drew forth a parcel, and, opening it, something appeared wrapped in a bloody handkerchief.

"Do you know this handkerchief, and what is wrapped in it?"

He handed the handkerchief to Conrad, who received it coolly.

"The handkerchief is mine," he said; "here is my name on it. I lost it last night in the garden. Some one must have picked it up."

Unrolling the handkerchief, he exposed to view a bloody dagger, no doubt the one used to kill Edgar Lane.

Conrad turned deadly pale. The dagger dropped from his hand and stuck in the ground. He saw at once that the leading questions of the coroner were intended to connect him in some way with the crime.

"I never saw this dagger before," he exclaimed, indignantly.

"Nevertheless," said the coroner, "it was found under the head of your bed this morning."

"Does any one suppose that I am in any way connected with this horrible crime?" said Conrad, looking around indignantly. His eyes suddenly rested on those of Louise Morton, who met his gaze with cold, penetrating look, her steely eyes glittering with triumph.

Conrad knew at once where the blow came from, and saw that it would require all his coolness and presence of mind to keep from being found guilty of the crime.

George May now rose. "Mr. Coroner," he said, "the ablest lawyer would have a poor chance against you on ground like this, where you can ask what questions you please and are not governed by the rules of evidence. I have been wrong in not insisting that my client should refuse to answer any questions at all; but having

confidence that you would believe in his honor and integrity, and consider his high position as a naval officer, I did not dream that you would resort to an ingenious system of cross-questioning. You have mistaken your profession, sir ; you would make an able lawyer. My client's indisposition to answer questions clearly arises from motives of delicacy about matters in which others are concerned, and which may not have the slightest bearing on the death of Lane.

"For instance, you want to know his motive for leaving the house so unceremoniously, implying by that that he wished to abscond. Why, then, did he come back when he had time to reach the boat ? That, I think, settles that part of your questioning, and so I could dispose of the whole. But I don't propose to go into any further argument, but simply to refuse to let my client answer any more questions, claiming the right, however, to cross-question any one giving evidence reflecting on him."

"Just as you please," said the coroner. "I will give you every indulgence ; but I have no more questions, at present, to ask Commander Conrad."

Miss Louise Morton was next called to the witness-stand. George May did not suppose she knew anything of importance, and took it for granted she had been called merely because she was a member of the family. He did not dream of the bitter evidence she had in store against Conrad. He had made up his mind that Louise and Conrad would marry each other, and never dreamed that she would say anything to reflect upon her lover.

When the coroner asked Louise to state what she knew of the murder, she rose from her chair and looked calmly and collectedly around, then, raising her hand, she pointed her finger at Conrad, and, regarding him with her steeliest eyes, said, slowly,

"There is the murderer !"

If a bomb-shell had burst in the midst of the assembly it could not have created more excitement. Every one rose to his feet.

Conrad forgot his weakness, and, seizing his chair in his hand, seemed about to hurl it at her head ; but in a moment he recovered himself and stood firmly, gazing at her with eyes that seemed to look her through.

"Yes, there he stands now !" said Louise, defiantly. "If any one had told me twenty-four hours ago that he was a murderer, I would have spurned him with my foot. I thought him the personification of all that was honorable ; I would have trusted my life to him. But when he came to me an hour before the murder and ac-

knowledge that Edgar Lane had chastised him with his own cane and he had not noticed it, I despised him as every woman should despise a man without courage. Mr. Conrad asked me—a woman—what he should do. ‘Go,’ I said, ‘and kiss his boots! That would be honor enough for you.’ From that moment I despised him. He begged me not to repeat what he had told me. ‘I shall publish it to the whole world!’ I replied. ‘Go! leave my father’s house; you have no business here!’”

At this point George May walked to the table and faced Louise. Her lip curled when she saw him, but he gave her a look that for a moment made her quail. It almost disconcerted her to think that this man, who had been her slave and whom she supposed would willingly marry her to-morrow, would for a moment put himself in opposition to her and take sides with the man that had won her heart and caused her to discard him.

May looked steadily at Louise.

“Why do you stare at me, George May?” said Louise. “What do you mean? Do you think to impeach my testimony?”

“No,” replied May; “God forbid that I should question your word, but I must protect my friend. Reflect a moment ere you speak words you may regret as long as you live. Yesterday you esteemed this gentleman highly; to-day you seem to wish to annihilate him. There must be some stronger reason than contempt for this change of opinion. A woman may not esteem a man she has loved when she discovers his infirmities, but she weeps over them in secret. She does not suddenly become his enemy without some personal cause, and so all reasoning people here will think. I feel that I am occupying a very delicate position, enjoying daily the hospitality of this house, and I would bear any imputation myself rather than hurt Mr. and Mrs. Morton’s feelings; but I have attempted to protect my friend, who is too ill to defend himself, and I urge you, before you go on with evidence that will doom him to destruction, to reflect. Do not be governed by any suppositions; tell only what you saw. Do not hold this gentleman up to the world as one beneath contempt. I saw the whole affair with Lane, and I know that Commander Conrad took the proper view of the matter. He would have left in a day or two, and, when no longer under Mr. Morton’s roof, he would have demanded satisfaction of Lane and punished him as he deserved. You are impulsive; think twice before you speak.”

Louise never moved a muscle of her face while May was speak-

ing. Her lips curled as he finished. "You shall not regulate my conduct, Mr. May," she said; "a fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind. Now that Mr. May has ended his gratuitous advice, I will tell the jury the rest of my story," and she proceeded as follows:

"When Commander Conrad saw the contempt in which I held him he remarked, 'It shall never be said that I had to be urged by a woman. When next we meet my honor will be avenged, and his heart's blood shall flow until the marks of his blow are washed out.' He then rushed for his room, and I hoped never to see him again. I believed him too great a coward to harm the man that had punished him for his insolence. My evidence may be prejudiced; very likely it is when I see the friend of my youth butchered at my father's door, and know that his poor, dependent mother will die of a broken heart when she hears the news. My feelings may get the better of my judgment, but, so help me God, I speak the truth.

"Curiosity took me to the old oak when I heard of Edgar Lane's death. Instinct told me who the murderer was. I watched Commander Conrad closely. I saw him stoop and pick up a dagger and wrap it in his handkerchief; then he walked to the house and to his room. I was close behind him all the time, like the avenging angel.

"Conrad was up early in the morning, and so was I to watch him. He had no sooner gone out than I called an old confidential house-servant who had lived with us for years. I said to her, 'There is hidden somewhere in this room the bloody dagger that killed Edgar Lane; let us find it.' We hunted every corner, went through his trunk, and looked up the chimney. I said to the servant, 'He has gone out to bury it.' She said, 'You don't suspect that nice gentleman.' 'I do,' I replied; 'I saw him pick the dagger up.' Then she spied a slit in the ticking of the lower mattress, and, putting in her hand, exclaimed, 'I have it, miss,' and pulled the dagger out. I shall never, as long as I live, forget my feelings at that ghastly spectacle. I have no more to say, Mr. Coroner; believe me or not as you will. Both these men have reasons for hating me, but truth is mighty and will prevail.

"By one of those impulses that often induce murderers to leave some track by which they can be found out, no doubt guided by fate to their own destruction, this man placed the evidence against himself where it would certainly be discovered in a day or two, for Bridget always turns the beds daily, and beats them with her hands."

There was a dead silence as Louise walked coolly and defiantly to her chair. All felt that her evidence was dictated by malice, though all were satisfied that it would convict Conrad.

Conrad looked at her scornfully as she moved away, and said, loud enough for all to hear, "And this is a woman! God forbid there should be any more like her!"

All the ladies were sobbing as if their hearts would break, and Mrs. Morton was carried fainting from the place. The men looked sternly, and could scarcely check their emotion. No one believed the evidence of Louise, yet they felt it was Conrad's death-warrant. He stood calm and self-possessed in his manly beauty, and betrayed no symptom of fear; he looked simply like an indifferent spectator.

George May was pale with anger. He went up to Conrad and said, "Come, my friend, this has been too much for you; you must take some rest."

But the coroner stated that he desired to question Commander Conrad further, in the mean time whispering to one of his men, and, giving him a paper, sent him off.

The coroner then called Bridget Mallone, the old confidential servant to whom Louise had referred. She gave her evidence in a rather amusing manner, but it gave no comfort to Conrad's well-wishers.

"Will, yer riverence," began Bridget, "I'll tell ye all I know. It's likely ye've heard of the Mallones of Killarney, an', begorra, niver a mon, woman, or chile uz there as iver tould a lie; an' ses Miss Louise ter me, who I've nursed these eighteen years an' more, says she, 'Bridget,' says she, 'there's a dagger in that room as kilt Mister Edgar Lane, an' I want yer ter find it.' An' says I, 'The Lord help us, yer don't suspect that bootiful young man as gives me a dollar twice a wik and agin on Sunday. I coint berlieve it, miss, for niver I've know gintleman like dat do sich dirty work as dat.' 'Coom,' she says, 'an' see, an' they've done kilt my ole playmate, as was Edgar Lane, because he was handsomer than every one or 'em.' An' we looked iverywhar, up the chimblly as well, an' says I, 'Here's where they put 'em in ould Irelan' when they kilt the landlorts,' an' I whipt up the bed an' the under-mattress, an' I see a slit not so long as yer fut, nor so short as yer honor's nose, an' I struck it wid me han', an' whin I tuk it out all smeared wid blood, says I, 'Some one's been kilt an' no mistake, an', bad luck till 'em, they've gone and spoilt one of missus's best mattresses,' an', yer honor, he was a noice young man nivertheless, an' he hat

an' open hant, an' perhaps it was an accident afther all, an' that's all I know ov it, yer riverence."

There was no need to cross-question Bridget. Her tale was too straightforward, and no one doubted that the dagger was found where she said it was; but still no one believed in Conrad's guilt.

"The evidence is closed," said the coroner. "The jury will retire and deliberate," and he led them away.

They were gone but twenty minutes, when they returned with their verdict, namely, "That Edgar Lane came to his death by a dagger thrust through the heart, given by the hand of Commander Ware Conrad, of the United States Navy."

Conrad never moved a muscle when he heard the verdict. He expected it, and prepared himself to meet it, but it sent a shock through the audience, though all had anticipated what was coming. The men came forward and offered their hands to Conrad, but Conrad said, "No, not until I am fully exonerated from this foul charge, of which I could clear myself in a moment if I chose to speak. But gratitude to my generous host and hostess forbids it for the present. I will only do so to save my life and honor."

Then the sheriff of the county stepped forward, and, laying his hand on Conrad's shoulder, said, "I arrest you, Ware Conrad, for the murder of Edgar Lane. Here is my warrant."

This shook Conrad for a moment, but he walked quietly away with the sheriff. They entered a wagon, to be driven to the county jail, Conrad's friends gazing sorrowfully after him as he moved away.

The crowd then dispersed, but the women moved their skirts as Louise Morton passed, so that they might not touch her, and the men scowled at her. All felt that she had sworn Conrad's life away for reasons known only to herself.

CHAPTER XLII.

AFTER THE INQUEST.

MARY SAMSON had nearly recovered from the shock of the tragical scene she had witnessed. Dr. Preston had insisted that she should return home to her mother, and offered to accompany her the next day. Patch cried as if her heart would break, kissed

her friend a hundred times, and begged her to promise to return when she was well, but Mary had received so many shocks that she determined never again to leave her mother.

Harry Morton was almost frantic at Mary's decision, and requested permission to accompany her home, but the old doctor was inexorable. The Mortons, he said, had caused nothing but bad luck to Mary, and she would now have to put up with him as an escort.

Mary was almost heart-broken at the idea of parting with Harry, for she felt as if she was never to see him again.

That night Mary went in to bid Mrs. Morton good-by, and found that lady inconsolable at the prospect of her departure.

"I do not blame you, my dear child," she said, "for going away; you have had many sorrows here and but little happiness."

Mrs. Morton wept over Mary as if she were parting with a daughter. "I don't know, sweet girl," she said, half choked with tears, "what makes me love you so. It seems to me that you are nearer to me than some of my own. You have been a joy and comfort to me ever since you came to my house, and have revived dear memories that were almost dead."

She kissed Mary many times, and made her promise she would come to see her the moment she arrived in New York, and so they parted.

The greatest of Mary's trials was parting with Patch, who clung to her with desperation. She insisted on sleeping with Mary on the last night, and lay sobbing at her side during the hours of darkness, and was up in the morning early to see her off.

Mary thought it was a duty she owed to the Mortons to say good-by to Miss Louise, although that young lady had treated her always with contempt, unless she happened to need her services. Mary had done her best to improve Louise in music and drawing, and no doubt would have accomplished a good deal in time, for Louise had naturally a fine musical voice.

Mary knocked at Louise's door about ten o'clock, and an imperious voice said, "Come in!" When Mary entered, Louise exclaimed, angrily, "What do you want here?" This was rather a damper to Mary, and the tears came to her eyes.

"I have come to say good-by," she said, "and hope I have not intruded. I shall leave early in the morning."

"It's a pity you ever came here," said Miss Morton, angrily;

"nothing but misfortunes have happened in this house since your arrival. Perhaps your going will break the devilish spell ; and let me say to you that I am not accustomed to have my mother's dependents take leave of me, as if they were my equals. If you come for your wages, I will inform you that my mother pays the servants. If you come for a *douceur*, there it is," throwing a light-filled purse at her. "I don't like impostors, and am told you travel with two different names."

Mary did not stop to repeat the good-by, but turned and left the room with dignity, leaving the purse lying on the floor.

"She scorns my gift !" said Louise, jumping up ; "there's money enough in the purse to keep the baggage a month. Every one scorns me now, and, O God ! I scorn myself !"

The night was dark, and a heavy storm was brewing. Quick flashes of lightning came, rapidly followed by loud peals of thunder and gusts of wind, while the moaning of the woods, caused by the swaying to and fro of the heavy branches, gave a most melancholy sound.

One loud peal shook the house after a flash of lightning that almost blinded Louise, and lighted up every part of the room.

She covered her face with her hands, then stood erect and looked defiantly out of the window. "Thunder away," she said, "it suits my mood ; flash your lightnings, you devils of the air—they make my heart feel gay ; only cast one bolt through *his* heart and you may consume me with your fire. He scorns me—he who loved me with the passion of a god. He trampled on me and gave me hate for love, and I have led him to the gallows." Again the lightning flashed and seemed to answer her prayers, enveloping her and the room in light, while the thunder that followed shook the house to its foundations.

"I can't stand this," she cried ; "better to face it in the open air. You spirits of hell, I come to meet you ; grant but my prayer, and do with me as you will !" She had only a light night-wrapper on her person, ready for retiring, and the luxuriant masses of her hair hung down her back unconfined ; her feet were incased in a pair of satin slippers.

Louise descended the stairs without a candle, which was rendered unnecessary, owing to the vivid flashes of lightning. She unlocked the outer door. A gust of wind blew it open and howled through the passage, scattering cloaks and hats in wild confusion over the hall-floor. She had not sufficient strength to close the

door, and left it open for the wind to continue its wild revel through the house.

She went toward the garden, though the wind clutched her clothing with demon force and nearly tore it from her back.

The rain, falling in great drops, struck on her fevered brow and cooled her for a time. "Rain on!" she cried; "drench me to the skin, and quench the fire that consumes my soul."

Louise saw the remains of the fluttering marquee where lately she and Conrad sat, she clasping his feverish hand and kissing his pale lips, he fondly toying with her beautiful hair and using the dearest epithets of love. "I'll reach that spot again," she said, "and shriek my anguish to the storm."

She reached the spot just as a gust of wind tore the marquee from its fastenings and hurled it through the air, where, like some great albatross, it could be seen sailing off to leeward, flapping its wings as if seeking shelter under some friendly cape. The chairs and settee were whirled along the garden-path and broken to pieces against the rocks and trees. Then down poured a torrent of rain, according to Louise's wish, to quench the fire burning up her soul. The rain beat her to the ground, and the wind blew her dress almost off. She clutched the grass, but the wind tore her grasp away. She then crawled to the tree, about ten feet distant, and blessed her lucky stars at attaining so safe an anchorage. She clasped the trunk half-way round with both hands, and held on with all her strength. The life she lately offered to the lightnings she now prayed God to save from the fury of the storm.

"Oh, there!" cried Louise, "I was so happy; but yesterday I felt as if I held the world within my grasp, and would not have changed conditions with a queen. Could *he* but see me now, and know how I love him, he would forgive me. I'll go to him and tell him if he'll but take me as wife, mistress, or slave, I'll go before a magistrate and swear on holy writ that what I've said was a base lie, and such it was. Oh, lightnings, strike and kill me now at once! I can not live without him!"

The lightning, as if it would take her at her word, illuminated the scene with its most vivid flash; the rain poured harder than ever, and the wind uprooted trees and threw them on the ground. Then came a sharp report, like a thousand pieces of artillery sweeping a battle-field. A bolt struck the tree under which she sat and splintered it into fragments; then the pieces took fire, and, in spite of the rain, burned fiercely, and, communicating to

the dead leaves only partially wetted, the flames towered to the heavens.

The heat drove Louise away, and she crawled along, dragging her embroidered skirt in the mud, like some slimy thing one might meet in Tartarus expiating some monstrous crime. The toads, driven from their holes by the rain, leaped over her drenched limbs, but she felt them not. The water, rushing down the paths, brought with it drowned rats and mice, swept from their garden-holes, and these would rub against her dainty cheeks and get tangled in the masses of her hair.

One, with a glimmer of life left in it, clutched her dress as it passed by and found a shelter in its folds. "O God!" she cried, "I pushed him on to death, and this is my reward. Yet even now I'll undergo ten times as much as this, and serve ten years' in hell, if he will only take me back again.

"I can not live without him. To see another lingering at his side and hanging over him as I have done, pressing burning kisses on his lips, would be a torture worse than any hell can frame."

Louise had clutched a bush whose prickly thorns found their way quite to the finger-bones through the soft flesh that he once so loved to kiss. She bore the agonizing pain, for she could not well let go the bush; the wind was so fierce it would have hurled her as it did the trees. Her last hope was a rose-bush lately filled with glorious clusters. The burning tree revealed their condition; oh, how like her in her sad state! The roses, beaten by the storm, hung down like the heads of convicts resting on their oars; the leaves were torn from their stems and scattered, leaving no perfume on the wrecked bush.

"Like me, your hopes are wrecked, poor rose-bush!" she said; "your life is well near done, and yet you retain the power to stab and kill. Your thorns are tearing my tender hands, which never were meant to work, much less to grub in this foul filth to save a worthless life—a life that no one cares for; and yet I'll bear it all, and ten times more, if he will only take me back again, and let me lie once more at his feet."

Then the lightning flashed fiercely out again, making the scene as light as day, and Louise could see that not a vestige remained of that sweet spot where she and Conrad had passed the happiest moments of their lives.

"I've been brought here by fate," she said, "to see the death of all my hopes in life. The fairy spot I decked with flowers for

him, the gorgeous tree the gardener deftly trimmed, the rich parterre that gladdened Conrad's feverish eyes, all that I brought to give him, every pleasure—all have been blasted by the lightning's flash, and nothing remains to remind me of happiness except the smarting of these pointed thorns, which tear my flesh and give me dreadful pain. Yet I would give every earthly pleasure, and be willing to lie anchored to this thorny bush for many long years, and have this rain and all these lightnings pour their wrath upon me, if I could only lay my head upon his breast and die!"

The rain beat upon her until it made her think her time to die had come, and then she prayed fervently to God to let her live. "He may yet relent," she cried, "and once more take me to his heart."

And this was all she thought. It never struck her that she ought to live to do penance for the crimes she had committed; it never occurred to her that she should go at once and undo the wrong she had done to Conrad. She was willing he should be free only provided he would take her back again. She would rather see him die a felon's death than live to take another woman to his heart. And she had registered an oath—in case Conrad should be acquitted—to follow him the world over and sacrifice him in case he ever attempted to unite himself with another.

All these thoughts passed through Louise's mind as she lay fastened to the thorny bush, and every moment she grew weaker and weaker.

Meantime the storm had awakened every one in the house. The shutters were torn from their fastenings, and panes of glass were blown in, flooding the rooms. Trees were prostrated all around the dwelling, and some of the outbuildings unroofed. The wind whistled through the halls by the door Louise had left open, and found its way up-stairs. The family were huddled together in Mrs. Morton's room; and, missing Louise, they sent to call her. All feared the day of judgment had arrived, and few felt prepared to meet it. The burning tree drew the attention of all toward it, for the flames lighted up the garden in every direction. The devastation caused by the storm could be plainly seen, and amid it all a human form lying on the ground, struggling against the violence of the elements.

The servant returned and reported that Miss Morton was not in her room, and then commenced a search for her all over the house. Mr. Morton and Harry searched every room, and, on inquiry, it

was found that the outer door had been locked and barred when the family went to bed. Then a thought passed through Patch's mind—she was quick to come to a conclusion. She knew how madly Louise had loved Conrad, though she could not account for the estrangement that had so suddenly taken place. She knew the lovers had spent much time under the marquee, "and there," she said, "Louise has wandered in her despair; the form lying there is hers." Patch flew to the bell-rope that led to the tower and pulled with all her strength, until the alarm-bell pealed loudly on the air, its hoarse tones piercing the storm and falling on the ears of all within its call.

The gardeners were all awake and up, witnessing, without the power of doing any good, the destruction of their summer's work. The stable-men rushed for the house, thinking it on fire. There they met Mr. Morton and his son, with livid faces.

"Miss Morton is missing from the house," said the banker; "look for her in the garden; Mr. Harry will lead you. A handsome reward for the man that finds her."

Patch had thrown on a waterproof, and hauled the hood over her head. She darted past the men and made straight for what was left of the burning tree. The storm beat fiercely on her head, and she fell often, but struggled up again. Once she had to clutch a bush to be kept from being swept down the garden-path by the rushing water, but she pushed on, and at length reached the point for which she was aiming. There she found Louise fastened to the thorny bush, her life apparently ebbing away.

Patch threw herself down by her sister's side and raised her head upon her lap, shrieking for aid, which soon arrived. It was dreadful to see this beautiful creature in such a condition, covered from head to foot with slime and filth, the dead rat still clinging to her clothes. They tried to raise her up, but she still clung to the bush with such tenacity that they could not move her, until at last it was discovered she was pinned there against her will. The more the thorns had pierced her hands, the stronger she had grasped them in her despair. It was found necessary to cut off the branch above and below her hands, and so carry her to the house, leaving the piece with the thorns still fastened in her flesh.

Harry and two of the men picked her up, and the violence of the wind was so great that they had the utmost difficulty in getting along, but at length they reached the house, where Mr. Morton waited to receive them. He was terribly shocked at the sight of

his daughter in the condition she was. "My God!" he exclaimed, "is this my child? She is dead! Woe is me; will there be no end to the curse that seems to have fallen on my house? Send for Dr. Preston," he cried, "and take the covered wagon, with two horses, to bring him. Make haste, and don't spare the animals!"

Fortunately, the storm was now abating. The wind went down as rapidly as it had arisen, and the rain had settled to a steady, heavy fall.

No one could have recognized Louise Morton at a first glance; she looked as if she had lain at the bottom of some nauseous pool for a week, and was covered with mud and filth.

The first thing was to get her into a warm bath and cleanse her; and this was soon accomplished. She still breathed and gasped from time to time, as if she wanted air. They got her to bed, and applied restoratives, the effects of which were soon apparent. Her pulse beat feebly, and she talked incoherently.

"O Heaven!" she exclaimed. "I'll take back all I said; it was a lie; but only let him take me to his heart. It was not Conrad who did the deed. It was I who killed him; he sacrificed my life. Forgive me, love, and let us once again sit under the lindentree, where I'll weave garlands to deck my hair, and bring smiles of joy to your sweet lips. Don't trample me to death! don't look at me with scorn! don't drive me from you as if I were a snake! You said I was false; you called me vile. Perhaps I am, and that's why he doesn't love me. He loves another, ha! ha! ha! I'll doom him to the gallows ere he can do that. I'll drive a dagger into the heart that comes between me and him I love. Don't let me drown, but save me, that I may keep him from the grave. I'm dying; let me die upon his breast."

And so she raved, with feeble, piteous voice, that brought tears to the eyes of those who listened to her. There were few that loved her there. Her mother alone loved her, with all her faults, but it was a love that gave her pain, the anxious love a mother feels for one that always seemed to choose the crooked path, and who never, for ten long years, had shown a sign of affection for all that had been lavished upon her.

Mrs. Morton looked like a corpse as she listened to the ravings of her daughter. Every one was sent from the room, and Mr. and Mrs. Morton and Patch were left alone to listen to her incoherent mutterings, which told of crimes she had committed. Patch stood by her mother, with her arms around her neck, kissing away the

salt tears, while Mr. Morton sat in an arm-chair, his hands over his eyes, and the hot tears forcing their way through his fingers. This hard, cold man had come to tears at last !

Dr. Preston arrived, and found them in this situation. He did not speak, but approached Louise, felt her pulse, and listened with his ear close to her lungs to hear her breathing. Then he took from his pocket a small phial, and poured out a mixture, which he forced between the patient's teeth. He asked no questions, for the driver who brought him to the house had told him all he needed to know. The doctor sat with his fingers on Louise's pulse for ten minutes, when she slept.

"Your daughter will live," he said to Mrs. Morton, "but will require all your care. In case she wakes within two hours, give her a teaspoonful of this mixture, and repeat again every two hours. I must now go, for I have a patient more ill far than your daughter, who scarcely has a shelter for her head. You need rest, madam, yourself. Miss Angeline, see that your mother goes to bed at once. Miss Bane can do all that is required here," and, without noticing Mr. Morton, whom he despised, Dr. Preston withdrew.

At seven o'clock in the morning the doctor called for Miss Samson. The Morton carriage was at the door to take her away, and Patch was hanging on Mary's neck, taking her last hearty cry. Harry was at the door, ready to hand Mary to the carriage, and had obtained permission from the doctor to accompany her to the boat.

The doctor took the front seat, and off they drove. It seemed to Mary as if she had left every hope behind her at Morton villa, and that all she could look forward to hereafter was tears and sighs. She did not speak a word during the drive ; her heart was too full.

She found all the gentlemen whom she had known at Morton villa at the steamboat-landing to see her off—Deville, George May, Vere Saye, and the officers of the Curlew, who were going down in the steamer to rejoin their vessel and take back the sad news of their commander's incarceration.

Mrs. Eton and Flossy were there also ; all had come to bid adieu to this sweet girl, who seemed to have found a place in every one's heart except that of Mr. Morton and Louise.

The ladies kissed her, and promised to find her out in New York, and the men all shook her kindly by the hand. Vere Saye whispered to her, "If ever you want a friend, call on me as if I were your brother." Deville slipped a card in her hand, which she took, but did not read.

Then Harry Morton helped her on board the steamboat, and, as he crossed the plank, he slipped a ring upon her engagement finger.

"O Harry," she said, "never forget me. I shall live for you, though we may meet no more."

"Do not fear, sweet love," he replied; "our parting will be short, for I will find you again, no matter where you are. I'll never love but you."

"All ashore!" cried the plank-men, and Harry had to tear himself away, the doctor pushing him along to be sure that he reached the shore again, for he determined Harry should not accompany Mary to New York.

Harry and Mary stood gazing at each other as long as possible, and, when they could do so no longer, both turned away in despair.

"A bad case of spooney!" said the doctor, half aloud; "I am afraid I have nothing in my pharmacy that will cure it. The parson is the only doctor needed here, yet the girl had better give these Mortons a wide berth. She never comes in contact with them but some misfortune happens. She is too young yet, anyhow, to be away from her mother, who must be a lady of refinement to have such a daughter as she—the fairest pearl I ever laid my eyes on."

Then the doctor sat down by Mary, and tried to cheer her up. "Don't fret, my child," he said, "at leaving so many friends. You will soon forget them when you embrace your mother again, and, take my advice, don't distress her by telling her of the events that have taken place at Hawks' Roost; tell her you left the place because it did not suit you."

The doctor tried to beguile Mary from her sad thoughts by pointing out, as they went along, such parts of the river as had any interest connected with them. They passed the time in this manner until the boat touched the wharf in New York.

The doctor accompanied Mary home, and delivered her safely in her mother's arms, who was so overjoyed to see her child that she seemed to forget the doctor's presence, and to thank him for his kindness to Mary.

When the doctor saw Mary's mother he said to himself, "Where have I seen that face before? It is very familiar to me. How sweet a lady she is! worthy to be the mother of such a daughter."

The doctor soon took leave of the ladies, making Mary promise to send for him in case she should ever need a friend.

All that day was spent by Mary in hanging around her mother's neck and telling her of the many kind friends she had made, but

she never told her mother a word of the disagreeable incidents that had happened at Hawks' Roost.

"When do you return, my love?" asked her mother.

"Never, darling mother!" replied Mary. "I will never live a day away from you again in my life. I am not happy from your side. We two must never part again. I could not bear to think of your being here all alone. I know how you missed me, though your mother's love would sacrifice your own happiness for mine if you thought I could enjoy myself away from you. It is all too grand for me at Hawks' Roost. I could not enjoy it while you were living here in such simplicity. I shall never leave your side again for any one on earth, no matter how great the advantages may be."

Her mother clasped Mary to her breast and covered her with kisses. "My own dear child," she said, "we will part no more. It was almost death to me to lose you even for the short time you were away."

It required no effort on Mary's part to settle down to her work again, though she could not drive Harry Morton from her mind. Indeed, she did not want to do so, for she determined to live for Harry, and for him only. Strange that Mary, who told her mother everything that was pleasant, did not once mention this young man's name. There are secrets, however, which young girls never mention to their mothers, wrong as concealment may be.

In examining her hand-bag, Mary found the card Deville had given her at parting. On it was written: "I feel toward you as if you were my sister; let me be a brother to you. You have lost your place through no fault of your own, and I have directed that an amount equal to your salary shall be paid you yearly as long as I live. Don't say me nay; it will hurt me more than you can tell."

CHAPTER XLIII.

CONSEQUENCES.

THE storm had made dreadful havoc with the grounds and buildings about the Morton villa, and many noble trees had been uprooted. As for the garden, it would require the labor of months to restore it to its pristine condition.

Even the Hawks' Throne—that mighty oak where the royal birds had roosted in security for centuries—was somewhat damaged. Several of the nests were blown down, and the hawks flew about in wild agitation, shrieking over the destruction of their homes.

Notwithstanding the violence of the storm, Morton villa appeared to be the only place that suffered materially. The fury of the elements seemed to be spent there, and within a distance of six hundred yards.

Mr. Morton, who was in a gloomy condition of mind, and viewed every occurrence through colored spectacles, could not help a superstitious dread when he beheld the ruin of his grounds, and saw how little harm had been done elsewhere. He shut himself up in his library, and saw no one unless obliged to do so. Everything looked so desolate about the house, and there had been a succession of such disagreeable events, that he determined to return with his family to the city as soon as Louise could be moved.

Louise was now apparently out of danger, though she lay in bed very quietly, rarely speaking. Her large eyes were fixed on a distant part of the room, and she seemed so absorbed in her own thoughts that she took no notice of any one.

When the doctor visited her and asked how she felt, "I'm quite well," she would reply, and he could get no more from her. When her meals were brought, she would eat a little, simply to sustain life, and then push the food away. Her mother and Patch sat in her room most of the time, Patch studying her French lessons, and Mrs. Morton sitting in an easy-chair, her hands folded, looking with anxious eyes straight before her.

Every now and then Patch would lay down her book, go to her mother, and, taking her head on her breast, kiss and pet her; then tears would roll down the mother's cheeks when she reflected on the difference in the dispositions of her two daughters. Louise had had everything in the world done for her, yet she never showed a particle of affection for either of her parents, while Patch—or Angeline, as we shall now call her—was fond of caressing her mother and bestowing affectionate epithets upon her, when, comparatively speaking, she had been neglected in the absorbing interest felt for the elder daughter.

Mrs. Morton had much to distress her. One month ago the villa at Hawks' Roost was all joy and pleasure, but it seemed to her that within the last week she had drunk the dark waters of woe

instead of the sparkling spring of joy, and her heart despaired when she saw how many untoward events had happened within a period so short.

There was, first, the mention of a name that seemed so to affect her husband, herself, and Vere Saye ; then the arrival of Mary Samson, whose presence had revived memories long since dead, or only recalled as some dim and distant dream.

It was true the coming of Mary had given her a pleasure she had not known for years ; yet, in the height of her happiness, her husband had returned and dashed it all to the ground by incoherent utterings that seemed to imply at some period in his life the commission of a crime.

Then came the memory of an occurrence that took place years ago, which Mrs. Morton thought nothing of at the time, but which now loomed up with much significance, and she had not the courage to ask her husband for an explanation.

The death of Edgar Lane on her husband's premises, at the hand of some unknown assassin, was a shock that almost deprived her of reason, for she liked the young man, and considered him almost as a member of the family. But when, at the coroner's inquest, her daughter had sworn away the life of the man whom Mrs. Morton had hoped would one day be her husband, her grief knew no bounds. She saw in this the ruin of her daughter's reputation, for she would always be pointed at as a woman that had voluntarily, and with malice, testified against the man who had been considered by her friends as her affianced husband.

Who would give Louise credit for any other than malignant motives, for not one soul believed her tale ? Mrs. Morton did not believe it, for if there was ever a pure-minded gentleman, and one who, in her opinion, would scorn to do an ignoble act, it was Ware Conrad.

He was the only person that had ever seemed to soften the hard nature of her daughter and bring out what few sparks of gentleness she possessed. She hoped, if Conrad should marry Louise, he might develop in her strong nature some points of character that would make her appear in a better light, and that there might be one power—the power of love—that would change her entirely. That hope was now crushed. Her daughter had returned from the inquest despised and hated by all who knew her, for all believed that she had committed perjury, with the intention of sending Conrad to the gallows.

What her motive could be Mrs. Morton could not imagine. There was a mystery about it that must strike every one else as it did her, and those not personally interested in Louise would naturally put the worst construction on it.

She felt that Edgar Lane's murder had something to do with it, but she was satisfied that Ware Conrad was innocent of any crime, and not only innocent, but, if he had been so minded, believed she he could have vindicated himself by betraying her daughter.

The final blow of all was the sight of her child brought in from the storm looking unlike anything human, and as if she had been dragged from the lowest and filthiest haunts. She thought that Louise, overcome with the weight of her crime, had gone out into the storm to commit suicide, and she thanked God that this dreadful crime had not been committed by a child of hers.

So many dreadful events had taken place that Mrs. Morton was in constant fear that something still more painful would occur. She apprehended that something was yet to follow that would be still more horrible, and she could only look to God to spare her any further calamities.

She could not have any interchange of thought with her husband, for his morbid condition forbade anything of the kind. He required all her care and affection. She did all she could to soothe him and calm his mind, and try to divert his thoughts from the calamities that seemed to have almost overthrown his reason. He neither ate nor slept, but wandered around the house, looking out at the damage done by the storm, and muttering to himself, "What next? what next? The end is not far off."

Harry Morton spent most of his time under the old oak, thinking over the happy days he had spent there with the idol of his heart. Angeline gave all her time to the care of her sister and to her mother. She knew that her mother had cause to grieve, but never dreamed how deep was her grief.

Denville, though he had scarcely spoken to Louise since he came to the country, and looked upon his chances with her as over, called now to inquire after her every morning at eleven o'clock, and every afternoon at four he came with a bouquet of roses. He had never for a moment ceased to love her with his whole soul. From the moment when he first beheld her at the Vandeusen ball his heart had gone out to her and had remained with her. He was not a demonstrative man, and none of his friends had ever seen him

show any feeling on any subject, though they all knew his heart was of the kindest nature.

Deville saw little prospect of ever gaining Louise's love, but that was no reason why he would not let her know he loved her still, in spite of all that was said against her.

On the day of the inquest, after the coroner and jury had departed, Deville and George May walked home to the "Lamb" together. Neither spoke on the way, and they ascended to the parlor, which they used in common, and there they sat in silence for half an hour.

Deville's face bore the expression of calm resignation, while May looked vexed and troubled. At length May broke the silence. "Deville," he said, "what do you think of this day's work?"

"I think it all very unfortunate," he replied, calmly, "but I have known in my life a worse state of affairs."

"But," said May, "what do you think of Louise Morton, after devoting herself so exclusively to Conrad, swearing away his life?"

"It will make no difference in my love for her," said Deville. "If she were blotched all over with crime, I should love her none the less, although I should regret the blotches. True love is like the roots of a tree that go deep into the ground. The tempest may strip off the leaves and splinter the branches, but the roots hold on and keep the tree from falling. My love is deeper in my heart than the root of any tree, and, while I live, there it will remain. I could not part with it if I wished. My heart is in continued pain. I suffer more than Prometheus did when the vulture was feeding on his vitals, but it is a pain I would only lose by possessing the cause of it. If I can not win her, I wish to carry it with me to the grave, and, no matter how Louise treats me, I mean to do all I can to serve her while I live. I should be sorry to think if a true woman loved me that her love would change even if I went to the scaffold. Why should a man be inferior to a woman in one of the noblest qualities of the heart? Why, if we love a woman, should we turn from her in her hour of disgrace and misfortune, and at the very time when she most needs our love to support her through her troubles? You would consider it a great disgrace to desert a wounded comrade in time of battle; how much greater disgrace, then, is it to desert the woman you love when all the world has turned against her! No! I would love her through every crime she might commit, and would try and redeem her, if I

could, though it might cost me an ocean of tears in doing so. My love is indestructible; you might as well try to dam up Niagara. My love will run on as long as I live, probably to my own misery, and perhaps destruction, but that's my case. There! I've told you more than I ever told before; don't let us discuss the matter further."

"My love is not so deep as yours," said May. "She humiliated me even when leading me to believe that she would love me if there were not some impediment in the way, and an hour later I saw her sitting at Conrad's feet, listening joyously to his professions of love. Poor fellow! He little thought the honeyed words that fell from her lips were but so many drops of poison, that would take away his life. I could not be jealous of that man, or hate him, he is such a noble fellow."

"Yes," replied Deville, "he is all that you say, and the man of all others best suited for her husband. She loved him as she never loved any one before. I have watched, and know all the symptoms. He loved her, but why they parted God only knows."

"Do you think," asked May, "that she believed what she testified?"

"No," said Deville, "not one word of it. It was simply woman's revenge."

"Yet," said the other, "you keep her in your heart still?"

"Yes," replied Deville, "deeper than any anchor fell that ever dropped in mid-ocean. Add on a thousand crimes, and I'd marry her to-morrow, even though I knew she would put her foot upon my neck the month after I married her. The man whom she betrayed loves her still, though his high sense of honor will not permit him to acknowledge it. As a proof of this, I saw by his look at her that he could vindicate himself if he chose, but he would rather die than betray her secret, for a secret there is. And you, George, will find it a difficult matter to root her out of your heart. You will find that thoughts of her will bring bitterness with them, but there'll be honey mixed with the bitter herbs, pleasant to the taste, and as older you grow the more you'll remember the love of your youth. She is one whose love man can not forget—one of the mischiefs Pandora let loose on earth to teach us to struggle with the delusions of life. You can not slumber daily in the shade of the poison-tree without loving the leaves, bitter and repulsive as they are to the taste."

George May did not answer. Perhaps what Deville said might

be true. The two friends then parted for the night, each to pursue his own thoughts.

Morton villa now being practically closed, the friends who had met there assembled at Mrs. Eton's residence, the "Dove-cote," where they whiled away the evenings as best they could. But how insipid it all was after the glorious hours they had enjoyed under the Mortons' roof! Deville found himself sitting every evening on the sofa by the side of Mrs. Eton, listening to her gay sallies of wit, and smiling lazily as she rattled on from one subject to another. She thought, "Poor, dear fellow! how much he loves me, although he is not very demonstrative! but he knows I wouldn't be untrue, even in thought, to my old bear, and it's just as well as it is." She never dreamed of the deep well of love in his heart for another. She had not forgotten that kiss he impressed upon her beautiful brow the night of Vandeusens's ball, while they were sitting among the fountains, and she had often wondered why he had not done so again; but it was just as well, she thought, the present style of love being much more innocent.

Vere Saye seemed lately to have given himself up to Flossy—dear little Flossy—who had found at last that he was not engaged, and would not hesitate to speak to her if they should meet in England, even in his uncle the bishop's diocese. He had made desperate love to her, which made Flossy very sleepless by night and restless by day. But he had never offered himself, and in his absence she used to practice what she should say to him when he should "pop the question."

Shortly after they began to assemble at Mrs. Eton's, Vere Saye came on one occasion to the house early. It was a beautiful evening. The sun was going down in a blaze of glory, tinting the clouds with golden hues that no painter could imitate. Vere Saye looked particularly happy, his handsome face beaming with pleasure. Flossy had been watching for him, and met him on the porch. He took her little hand and kissed it as a subject would that of a queen.

"Come, Flossy," he said, "let us take a walk; it is early yet, and I see that you and I are the only ones here." So Flossy put on her chip hat, and they went off together, for all the world like a three-decker with a small cutter in tow.

After going a little distance along the river-road they turned into a side-path, a beautiful, romantic walk. As they entered it Vere Saye remarked, "Flossy, do you know that you are the dear-

est little flower in the world, and that I love you better than all the flowers I ever saw ?”

Though Flossy had been expecting this avowal, she was taken aback at its suddenness, and forgot the fine speech she had so carefully studied. Her happiness was so great that she knew not what to say ; but, after thinking for a while, she managed to ejaculate, “ Mr. Robert will be pleased at this, I’m sure.”

“ But what do *you* say, Flossy ? ” inquired Vere Saye.

“ I ? ” she answered ; “ why, yes, of course ; you didn’t suppose I’d say no to you, did you ? I’ve been wondering why you didn’t ask me before ; you’ve been squeezing my hand, and playing with my fingers, for ten days ; but perhaps you didn’t know it.”

“ Now that you mention it,” said Vere Saye, “ I think I do remember something of the kind.”

“ I saw you,” said Flossy, “ pick up one of my shoulder-ribbons and put it in your breast coat-pocket, and you never returned it. And, oh ! that night I dreamed I was a butterfly.”

“ How very singular ! ” remarked Vere Saye. “ I dreamed that you lighted on my shoulder as a butterfly and kissed me.”

“ That was remarkable,” said Flossy ; “ and I also dreamed you proposed to me.”

“ To think,” said Vere Saye, “ that I should have forgotten something,” and, turning, he beheld Flossy with her pretty little mouth held up for a kiss. He gave her a dozen. “ You see, Flossy,” he said, “ how little I know of such things. You are the first girl I ever kissed.”

“ Indeed ! ” exclaimed Flossy ; “ but you seem to understand it pretty well ; and there’s one comfort : you are not too old to learn. Now won’t we be happy here every day ? This shall be our own love-grove, and you can tell me every day how much you love me.”

“ But, Flossy, darling, I can’t be here every day. I’m going on a journey, and I determined to secure you before I went, for fear somebody might pick you up while I was gone.”

Flossy withdrew her hand, and tears sprang to her eyes. “ Do you think,” she said, “ that any one who chooses can pick me up ? Do you think I can be won so lightly ? ”

“ You precious little darling ! ” he replied ; “ to think that I should bring a tear into those pretty eyes ! Let me kiss them away,” and he suited the action to the word, which Flossy bore philosophically. He put his arm around her and drew her to him,

and Flossy fitted as naturally to his side as if she had been out out for it.

"Now," said Flossy, "call me your little precious darling again, to make up for your naughty speech."

After Flossy's request had been complied with, Vere Saye inquired, "Who is this Mr. Robert of whom you spoke?"

"Don't you know Mr. Robert? I thought everybody knew him. He's my guardian angel, my Aladdin, who travels about with lamp and ring; all he has to do is to rub them and everything he wants comes at once."

"Some old wizard, I suppose."

"Old wizard, indeed!" exclaimed Flossy; "he's a handsome young man, and so strong that he could carry a house on his shoulders. I wish you could see him twist iron bars. He's stronger than you and Mr. Deville put together. He's much stronger than father, and father never met his match till he came to this country."

"I believe you," said Vere Saye, with a touch of sarcasm; "and how did he meet his match here, Flossy?"

"Why, Mr. Robert just handled father once as if he had been a child."

"That seems incredible, Flossy, for your father is a Hercules. How did he handle him?"

"He knocked popsy down," said Flossy, "and laid him up for ten days—" but, suddenly reflecting, she turned very red in the face and said, "Gracious me! I mustn't talk about that even to you."

"Then tell me about your handsome Aladdin. I suppose you were a little in love with him before you met me."

"No, not a bit; but you see Mr. Robert was so very kind to us. He took us from poverty and made us rich. Why, everything I have on earth he gave me, and now popsy has money of his own, and deposits in Mr. Deville's bank, and Mr. Eton indorses his notes." Flossy said all this with an air of triumph.

"But how handsome a man is this Mr. Robert, for I am getting very jealous of him?"

"He's about your size," said Flossy, "but not so good-looking, except his eyes, which look just like yours; but he has a red, sun-burned face, a tawny beard, and a large nose with the skin peeling off. I don't believe he has any good teeth, for he never shows them. His hands are large and rough, and he wears heavy shoes, and, oh! you ought to see his dress—a brown suit of Scotch stuff that looks as if it had been worn two years steadily. Mr. Robert

isn't at all lovable to look at, but his disposition is lovely ; I say what I please to him, and he treats me like a child. You needn't be jealous of him, for I have only known him since April last."

"Yet," said Vere Saye, "you have only known me a month, and have fallen in love with me in that time."

"Yes," replied Flossy, laughing, "but you and Mr. Robert are two different persons ; you'd laugh at the idea of my falling in love with him if you could see him."

"Are he and your father in business together ?" inquired Vere Saye.

"Yes," replied Flossy ; "he is at our house in Chambers Street almost every day when we are at home. Sometimes he is absent for a fortnight at a time, but not often."

"I can't help feeling a little jealous of him still," said Vere Saye, "and must see him before my mind is relieved. I believe he is a handsomer man than you are willing to acknowledge. Where does he live, Flossy ?"

"Really, he never told popsy or me where he lives. I suppose he lives somewhere in New York."

Vere Saye laughed and said : "You are an innocent little thing, Flossy. I hope the intercourse you will have with the world won't rob you of that manner of yours. And now six kisses just to rub off the little jealousy yet remaining about Mr. Robert."

Flossy held up her little rosebud of a mouth and submitted, saying, "You are learning fast, and making up for lost time, are you not, Mr. Vere Saye ?"

"I'm getting old," said Vere Saye, "and must get on. But now let us go and join our friends. Mind, Flossy, don't let them find out that we are engaged ; let us keep it a secret until I return from my journey."

Flossy looked disappointed ; she hoped to have had the pleasure of telling Mrs. Eton all about it, but Vere Saye's word was law to her now, and she gave the promise he required.

They strolled back to the house, talking of their happiness as lovers do. There was an unusual brightness in Flossy's eyes that evening, and a heightened color in her cheeks. Mrs. Eton's sharp eye noticed it, and she determined to worm Flossy's secret out of her the first time they were together alone.

Mr. Vere Saye informed them all that he should leave next day, to be absent a couple of weeks, and they bade him good-by

with regret, for he was extremely agreeable, and they felt he would be a great loss to their little circle.

Vere Saye bade Flossy good-night as if nothing unusual had occurred between them, and departed early to his lodgings; but the glances he exchanged with Flossy did not escape Mrs. Eton, who was ever on the *qui vive* for such signals.

When Commander Conrad was committed to jail, the first move made by the circle at the Dove-cote was to endeavor to obtain his release on bail, and they put their names to a paper agreeing to give security to any amount for his appearance when wanted. But the authorities decided that the offense with which Conrad was charged was not bailable. Conrad himself declared that he would not accept bail, and expressed his intention to remain in prison until he was acquitted of the charge against him.

He bore his confinement uncomplainingly for three days, though living on prison fare, but on the fourth day his frame, enfeebled by his wound, gave way, and he had to send for the prison physician. This person, who proved to be a kind-hearted man, on ascertaining Conrad's condition, insisted on his being removed to a room in the sheriff's house adjoining the jail, where he was made as comfortable as possible. His friends all flocked to tender their services, but Conrad declined seeing any one.

On the eighth day the physician recommended Conrad's friends to notify his family that the commander could not live more than a week—that a reduced system, combined with a severe case of blood-poisoning, had raised his pulse to 120, which could not be reduced by any means in his power. Dr. Preston was called in, and saw that the case was hopeless. After the second day's attendance he so informed Conrad, and asked if he had any instructions to give. The patient received the news calmly, and said he had no instructions to give, but did not want to die in jail—that he wanted his body sent to his family, but did not want them to know anything about it beforehand. "And, Doctor," said he, "send for a magistrate to receive my deposition. I am entirely innocent of the charge against me, and know nothing of the crime."

At the earnest solicitation of his friends, Conrad was removed to Mrs. Eton's cottage, where he spent his last hours among those who held him in the highest esteem, and never believed that he was implicated in the death of Edgar Lane.

A week after Conrad's death his father came and took the body

with him to his home in Virginia, to be laid in the vault with his ancestors ; and this was the last of poor Conrad.

This was the second death in the village in a period of two weeks under unusual circumstances. After the inquest the body of Edgar Lane was buried in the village grave-yard, and a simple stone, worn with age, tells to this day the story of his fate.

On the day Conrad's body was removed from Mrs. Eton's house to the boat to carry it to Virginia, the bells tolled. Louise Morton, who had never yet spoken voluntarily to any one, rose upright in bed and listened. "Patch," she said, "why are those bells tolling?"

Angeline looked at her calmly and solemnly, and replied, "They are tolling for death ; but lie down, Louise, and don't excite yourself, or you will never get well."

"I am quite well now in body, but sick in mind," replied Louise. "The sound of those bells disturbs me. Who has died here in this healthy place ? It must be some very old person."

"Whoever it is," said Angeline, "he is at rest."

"He !" exclaimed Louise. "Who is it ? Something in your face makes me fear you know more than you choose to tell. Tell me at once, I say."

"The bells," said Angeline, looking steadily at her sister, "are for Conrad, who is being carried dead to his friends in Virginia."

With a piercing shriek Louise sprang from the bed and grasped her sister by the arm with the strength of a vise. "Dead ! did you say, and gone from me for ever ? Dead in prison, and I not there ! But he would have spurned me from him." And taking her head in her hands, her disheveled hair hanging all about her shoulders, she seemed to be looking at something in the far distance. Then she dropped her hands before her and sank upon the floor. "Dead !" she cried ; "better so than that he should have lived to marry another, and have me moaning my life away for him ! No one can get him now ; he is mine to eternity. I should have committed unheard-of crimes had he married again. O Patch ! I loved him as woman never loved man before."

"And yet," said Angeline, "you caused his death."

"I ?" said Louise, "I cause his death ? Then may God forgive me ; but he spurned me after winning my love, and threw me off as if I had been a nauseous reptile. I offered to serve as his slave if he would take me back, but he told me that when he married it should be to some one as unlike me as heaven is unlike the

earth. I sought revenge, and found it; but I did not intend he should die. I would have told the truth at last.

"Poor soul! he might have lived, and been so happy! I should have been the shield that kept off every harm, the shadow that followed his footsteps night and day, the one to tend him if he slightly ailed, and soothe him to sleep after his toils were over—and yet he would not have it so. He spurned me as if I was a snake, called me scorpion, devil—all that an angry tongue can utter. Was I a saint, that I could bear it all?"

Angeline looked at her sister with horror depicted on her countenance. "What!" exclaimed she, indignantly, "did he call you names that ought to be applied only to the most degraded beings? Why did he do so? You must have sunk very low in his esteem to be treated in that manner. Remember, Louise, you testified against him while living; he is dead now, and can not defend himself. He must have known something against you to make him treat you so."

Louise looked subdued, but said nothing. Angeline went up to her sister, and, taking her by the wrist, pulled her hand away from her face, and in her old, defiant way, exclaimed, "Louise, did he know anything of your affair with Edgar Lane, which you carried on for two years right under papa's and mamma's noses?"

"How much do *you* know?" said Louise, clinching her hands and looking straight into Angeline's face; "tell me quickly, or I'll tear your eyes out."

Angeline looked at her calmly and steadily. "Louise Morton, I'm the only person in the house that is not afraid of you, and you ought to know it. You are almost too wicked for me to show you the kindness of a sister. You are no longer ill, but are well and full of badness; you are able to take care of yourself, and I will go to mamma, who needs my help; but I must say one thing before I go: you are as leaky as an old boat, and can't help telling your affairs to some one. Look out in whom you confide, or you may be betrayed, and more things come out than you desire."

So saying, Angeline went from the room, leaving her sister to her own reflections.

Vere Saye, after parting from Flossy, had hardly reached his apartment when Chic lighted upon the floor. "I am here a little earlier than usual, sir," said he, "to see if you wanted me to pack your trunk, and bring you something I picked up at the coroner's inquest. I saw this dagger fall from Mr. Conrad's hand at the in-

quest and stick in the ground, and when I thought nobody was looking I picked it up. They have hunted everywhere for it, but, as I knew you were fond of antiquities, I brought it to you."

"Thank you, Chic," said his master, "you are always useful; but I've much for you to do before I leave. I'm afraid it's an all-night job, but it's early yet, and you must accomplish a good deal. Go to Morton villa and watch the library-windows. I want some letters written some twenty years ago. If you find any such documents, or anything with the name of Gale on it, bring them to me. He will go to bed shortly; I know his habits. Now go, and don't lose a moment."

Chic was gone in an instant, and Vere Saye took up the dagger Chic had brought to examine it carefully. "An ugly job this dagger accomplished," he muttered, "and a hard-looking weapon it is, fit for an Italian vendetta. What would I give to know all that dagger could tell if it could speak! That woman knows more about the matter than she will ever divulge. She is bad enough to do the deed herself, but the murderer must have been a man, for no woman could drive this weapon through a man's body in the way it was done. Who could have desired the death of the poor fellow? Conrad was as innocent as I am, in spite of the evidence against him."

In the mean time Chic went on his errand, and, on arriving at Morton villa, saw a light shining through the library-window. He softly opened a blind just enough to see what was going on inside. Mr. Morton was seated at the table, with a package of letters before him. "They look old and yellow enough," thought Chic. "Some more of my master's antiquities, I suppose."

Mr. Morton opened the letters one after another till, coming to one of them, he jumped up hurriedly, walking the room for some time. Then he sat down, and commenced again to read the letters, which seemed to exercise a singular fascination upon him. Once he put the corner of a letter in the blaze of a candle, as if to destroy it; but, changing his mind, he extinguished the flames and hurriedly tied up the bundle of letters, as if alarmed by a sudden noise. He then went to a book-case and took from the top shelf a box made in imitation of a book, in which he placed the letters, then locked the box, putting the key in his pocket. He then sat for some time looking at the shelf where the dummy-book rested. It was the third book, top shelf, left-hand side, as Chic carefully noted. At last Mr. Morton rose and left the room, taking the candle with him and locking the door.

Chic, who understood all the doors in the house, was soon in the library, and in a moment had found the step-ladder and mounted it in the dark, counting, all the time, "top shelf, third book, left-hand side." Chic's pocket was the depository of numbers of small keys, and the first one he tried fitted the lock of the box. Everything in the shape of a letter was transferred to Chic's breast-pocket, the imitation book locked and replaced on the shelf, the ladder returned to the exact spot from which he had taken it, and this done he left the house with his plunder. All this was performed so quietly it would not have startled a mouse.

As Chic turned to depart a light suddenly flashed from the library-window, and, looking back through the blinds, he saw that Mr. Morton had returned with a copper pan in his hand. Mr. Morton took down the imitation book and opened it, then rubbed his eyes, and plunged his hand into the box. His face turned livid as he uttered a howl like that of a wounded animal, which resounded through the house. Then he fell prostrate on the floor, crying in agony, "Betrayed ! betrayed ! lost ! lost !"

In a few moments the library-door opened and Chic saw Mrs. Morton enter the room with a light in her hand. She bolted the library-door, and took her husband's head upon her lap, passing her hands through his hair. "Poor husband !" said she, "what is the matter with you ? What does all this mystery mean ? What is it you fear ? Let me share your sorrow."

"Ah, Eleanor !" he cried, "all is lost. I am betrayed, betrayed ! Only ten minutes ago I left the room, leaving some papers, on which my life depends, in this box, which I placed on that upper shelf. I determined to destroy the papers, and returned to do so, but when I came back they were gone. I have been watched and plundered of that which will make my name infamous. But I will tell you all ; you shall share my misery, as you have shared my prosperity. Hark ! I hear something moving outside !" Seizing a loaded pistol, he went to the window, but all was quiet. Chic had disappeared, and was on the way to his master with the news.

Mr. and Mrs. Morton remained in the library until long after daylight. What passed between them was known only to themselves ; but when Mrs. Morton left her room, two days after, those who saw her hardly recognized her ; it was as if a stranger had come into the house. Her face was pinched and wan, her once brilliant eyes were dim and sunken, and her beautiful brown hair was streaked with gray. Only the most dreadful mental agony could

have produced such changes. Mrs. Morton had apparently drank the cup of bitterness to its very dregs. Angeline fainted when she saw her mother, and Harry fell on her neck and wept like a child. All felt that some great sorrow had fallen on the house, but what it was none of them was permitted to know.

We will leave the gloom that has thickened around Morton villa and follow Chic to his master's room, where Vere Saye was patiently waiting for him.

Chic jumped to the floor from out of the tree. "The mail, your honor, has arrived with a batch of letters that have been at least twenty years making the trip. They have a decidedly malarial appearance." Chic laid the letters before his master with a profound bow.

"These are the letters I have been in search of," said Vere Saye. "You are, indeed, a wonder. They are addressed to 'Charles Gale, Esq., Boston Bank, Boston, Massachusetts,' each marked 'Ship Letter'—eight letters in all, signed 'James Gale.' I will read them to-night before starting on my journey. I shall leave in the early boat, Chic. But remember, there are some letters I still want from Miss Louise Morton's *escritoire*. Keep your eyes and ears open, and write your journal regularly. Here's fifty dollars to send to your mother, and a ten-dollar note for yourself. Now, good-night!"

Chic turned a somersault upon the floor, dove into the tree, and glided down the trunk as smoothly as a stream of water.

Vere Saye spent an hour reading the letters, and a happy smile illumined his countenance as he finished. He had learned many things, and some circumstances that once appeared dark to him now seemed perfectly plain.

He deposited his valuable papers, including the directions given by Mr. Morton to Edgar Lane, in his breast-pocket, this pocket being lined with a fine steel armor through which no pickpocket's knife could penetrate, while the pocket was locked so that the smallest hand could not be inserted, and the key placed in a secret receptacle. In this way Vere Saye traveled.

CHAPTER XLIV.

COMING TO LIGHT.

ON the afternoon of a day early in November a venerable-looking man was seated in a comfortable and cheerful office in State Street, Boston. He was, perhaps, sixty-five years of age, but hale and hearty, showing that he had led a temperate and regular life. He was hard at work making up and labeling bundles of papers. This was Stephen Lindsay, attorney-at-law, the gentleman whose name has before appeared in these pages. While thus employed, a knock was heard at the door, and Mr. Lindsay's cheery voice, as he said "Come in!" sounded as if he would be glad to see the person who knocked so loudly.

It was our old acquaintance, Vere Saye, who presented himself. "I need not apologize, Mr. Lindsay," he said, "for calling, for I come on business. I wish to obtain your assistance to unravel a mystery that troubles me very much. I go by the name of Vere Saye; it rests with you to tell me who I am." He laid a small hand-bag on the table, and, taking a chair, remarked, "With your permission I will sit down."

Mr. Lindsay received his visitor courteously. "I will be glad, Mr. Vere Saye," he said, "to listen to you, and, if circumstances justify it, will give you my professional services. Before I have dealings with any one I am accustomed to require an introduction from some responsible person, but in this instance that will not be necessary, and it will afford me pleasure to serve you."

Mr. Lindsay thought to himself, "I never in my life saw so fine a specimen of a man as this; his eye is like that of an eagle."

"In that case," said Vere Saye, "we will soon get to work on what I am after. Can you tell me, sir, if there are two persons living by the name of Agnes and Mary Gale?"

Mr. Lindsay started when he heard these names, for it was only about a month before that some one had called upon him to obtain the same information, but that person was evidently disguised, and the lawyer declined holding any communication with him.

Vere Saye was a different sort of person, and did not go beating about the bush. Still Mr. Lindsay hesitated. "There are reasons," he said, "why I can not give information relative to Mrs. Gale and her daughter."

"Which will all disappear," said the other, "when I show you the papers in my possession. I must first give you an outline of my history, and you may then judge whether or not I have reason to be anxious to learn the whereabouts of these two people. I may be on the wrong track; if so, the work of a life-time in searching for them has been thrown away.

"I do not know my real name," said Vere Saye; "the one I wear is borrowed. I was too young when stolen from my parents to recollect much about them. I remember my mother, and an old man, who had me continually on his knee; also a little boy, with whom I played." At this point Mr. Lindsay gazed at him intently. "I lived somewhere by the sea," continued the speaker, "where there were steep, rocky cliffs. I was stolen away by a man whose face I would know among a thousand people. He treated me brutally for four years, and brought me up as a gymnast, tight-rope dancer, and magic-trick performer. When I was about ten years of age my master sold me to a circus-man, who treated me more brutally still; in fact, his ill usage almost obliterated the memory of my early life. He took from me all that would remind me of early days, including the clothes I wore when I was stolen away. However, I found the clothes in a trunk where he had concealed them, and at about the age of twelve years made my escape, and never saw my tyrant again. I have managed to keep the clothes to this day in all my wanderings, and here they are." He took from his bag a little brown suit and pocket-handkerchief, which we have seen before. "The clothes," resumed he, "are marked 'C. G.,' while the cap is marked 'J. G.,'; the handkerchief, marked 'Mary Gale,' evidently belonged to a little child."

"My God!" exclaimed the lawyer, "the ways of Providence are inscrutable. Will you, my dear sir, take off your coat and let me look at your right arm?"

"What you look for is there, sir," said Vere Saye, removing his coat and showing a bared arm of such herculean proportions that the lawyer stood amazed. Just above the elbow was a spot the size and shape of a young mouse. The lawyer was overcome with emotion. "Thank God for all his mercies!" he exclaimed; "what joy it will bring to Agnes to find one of her sons! Do you know," said he to Vere Saye, "that you had a twin-brother so like you that you could scarcely be distinguished apart?"

"And who am I, then?"

"You are the son of James and Agnes Gale, and the brother of Mary Gale, one of the sweetest girls I ever laid eyes on."

"Thank God!" said Vere Saye, "that I am neither a waif nor the wandering Jew, for I began to think I was one or the other. I have never known a mother's care, but I think I should remember her eyes if I saw them."

Mr. Lindsay shook him warmly by the hand, and congratulated him on discovering his family after so many years. "What a joy this will be to your dear mother, who is a saint on earth, when she has you once more in her arms! She has never given up the hope of finding you, and now that she will have a protector she need live no longer under an assumed name. Several attempts have been made to find her whereabouts, and once an attempt was made on her life; but now, thank Heaven! she is safe. You will protect her."

"And pray," said Vere Saye, as we will still call him, "what name does my mother go by?"

"Agnes Samson," replied Mr. Lindsay, "and her daughter is known as Mary Samson."

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Vere Saye, "I have been with my sister for the last month and did not know it, yet I loved the dear girl with a brother's affection, for which I could not account. Wonderful are the ways of Providence working for their own ends rather than our pleasure or benefit. I think, Mr. Lindsey, from what I already know, that out of the Gale history will be developed the most remarkable concatenation of events ever known—such as would make a sensational romance."

"Ah! my dear sir," said Mr. Lindsay, "every life is a romance; or, as Shakespeare puts it, 'All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players.' No matter how we express it, there is no doubt that some mysterious power has a watchful care over the destinies of men. Some are distinguished more than others, but all are led into conditions they never anticipated, and over which they have no control. The battles of life are oftener won by the decrees of Providence than by the energies of men. We see the most incongruous mixing up of things, producing a tangle which it seems as if we could never straighten out, and which would, no doubt, get more tangled if we undertook to interfere with Providence."

"Now, I have an idea that we have not yet seen the end of the Gale romance. You are the first discovery we have made, and

through you all things will be brought to light. I do not think Providence intended Mrs. Gale should undergo her many misfortunes without compensating her in some way. She has borne all her afflictions with the serenity of a saint, has never murmured at her hard fate, but has ever thanked God for his mercy in leaving her her lovely daughter, who has developed into a magnificent woman. I believe there are yet rewards in store for her that none of us dream of. The fact is, sir," continued Mr. Lindsay, "I am a firm believer in Providence, and think everything is governed by one great guiding hand, even to the falling of a sparrow. Who are we that we should ask the whys and wherefores of our great Creator? How much do we know of the ant, its thoughts, its life, and the manner of its dying?"

There is no knowing how long Mr. Lindsay might have discoursed on his favorite subject had not Vere Saye abruptly asked him, "When did my father die?"

"I don't know that he is dead," said the lawyer. "He was supposed to have been lost at sea twenty years ago, and that may have been the case for all I know. Ah, sir, he was the nicest young fellow I ever met. You look like him; but, though robust, he never had such a physique as you have."

"Ah, well!" said Vere Saye, "I must know him by reputation, and by what my mother will tell me of him. Would that he could have lived to see me grown a man!"

"Perhaps he will see you yet," said Mr. Lindsay. "Who knows? Believe in Providence, young man; stranger things have happened. Perhaps he drifted to the sea of Saigoma, and lived on the seaweed and crabs which abound among the weed islands. Perhaps he was whirled aloft by equatorial currents, and carried on upper regions to the North Pole, to return to us some day full of information about that *terra incognita*, or perhaps—"

"Perhaps," interrupted Vere Saye, "we had better stop theorizing and proceed to business. Your theory of Providence, Mr. Lindsay, is doubtless a good one, but I am a very practical man, and try to account for things in the simplest way possible. There are many cases where events seem to determinate toward a certain point, and to arrange themselves in order, so that the *dénouement* will bring all the actors into the right places; where the good will be rewarded and the wicked punished; where ill-gotten wealth will fall away from the dishonest man, and fall as naturally into the lap of the righteous as ripe pears fall into little boys' hats held to catch

them. But just think, sir, of the millions of cases where Providence does not seem to interfere at all, and lets a whole nation suffer without one compensating feature in the affair. Perhaps, Mr. Lindsay, when I have lived as long as you have, and seen life in all its phases, I shall become a proselyte to your opinions. I think it likely my brother may turn up, if living. I shall leave no stone unturned to find him."

"He has the same mark on his arm that you have," said Mr. Lindsay, "and you were as like as two peas."

"Yes," said the other, "but a gentleman can't be going about asking every man whom he thinks resembles him to let him examine his arm. Turning from theory to practice, I will call your attention to these papers, which you will say are important. But first I must inform you of some events that recently took place at Catskill, where I have spent the fall months."

Vere Saye then gave Mr. Lindsay a detailed account of everything that had occurred at Hawks' Roost. He then handed the lawyer Mr. Morton's instructions to Edgar Lane to make inquiries about the Gale family. "This paper," said he, "though without date or signature, was doubtless written just previous to the murder of Edgar Lane. The bag was picked up on the ground just after the deed was committed, and brought to me by a boy, and, as the papers were most important to me, I made no scruple in retaining them. This man Morton seems to be engaged in some dishonest transaction, for he orders his secretary to destroy the paper when committed to memory. As to the letters of introduction, I believe them forgeries, for, on comparing them with the signatures of the two gentlemen, whom I know, they seem poor imitations of the originals; but you can judge for yourself."

Mr. Lindsay put on his spectacles and began carefully to read the instructions, every now and then dropping sundry expletives, such as "rascal!" "scoundrel!" "villain!" etc. After reading the paper he took it to the window and carefully examined it. Then he put his hand to his head, and finally went to his iron chest and took from it an old letter, which he laid before Vere Saye.

"These two papers," said Mr. Lindsay, "are written by the same person, at an interval of twenty years. Both are in a disguised hand. The old letter was written to your mother as a threat to make her leave Gale House, but, as she paid no attention to it through my advice, the scoundrel or scoundrels set fire to her house, hoping to destroy her and her daughter."

Mr. Lindsay then gave Vere Saye a detailed account of the whole transaction ; how he had tracked a man through the snow the day after the fire, how he had found the turpentine and tow-balls, and how he had traced the track made by the wheels of a gig until it was lost in other tracks. How he had ascertained that a man had hired a gig in Salem the night of the fire, that he had returned soon after daybreak, paid for the team, and departed south by the early stage.

"The man who wrote that threatening letter to your mother is the same person who wrote the instructions to Edgar Lane, and the same one who wrote this note to me six months ago, demanding to see me in reference to some matters relating to the Gales."

Vere Saye carefully compared the three letters, and, turning quietly to Mr. Lindsay, said, "That man is Mr. Charles Morton."

"I agree with you," said Mr. Lindsay, "and who will tell me after this that there is not 'a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we may' ? If Edgar Lane, who seems an important link in the chain, had not been murdered, you would perhaps never have known anything about these papers, or learned that your name is Gale."

"It does seem somewhat providential," said Vere Saye, "having Edgar Lane killed just in the nick of time, so that I could secure these papers ; but it seems to me a simpler method would have been for them to have blown out of the library-window and fallen at my feet, or have this man Morton direct them to me by mistake. But, to come back to the practical, where was this threatening letter written ?"

"From Albany, and has the water-mark of a firm in that place."

"Now, sir," said Vere Saye, "please look over these eight letters and explain them to me. James Gale, you say, was my father ; who is this Charles Gale to whom he is writing ?"

"His brother," replied Mr. Lindsay, "who had charge of your father's affairs while he was in Canton. When your father's death was announced his brother applied for his place in Canton, and went out there with his wife and child in the bark *Nimrod*. The vessel and all on board were lost."

"Can you imagine," said Vere Saye, "how these letters of James Gale ever came into Mr. Morton's possession ? Did Charles Gale deposit them with Morton, or did he make Morton his agent ?"

We must find out when Mr. Morton set up as a banker in New York. But first read the letters.

"The first letter is from Canton; James Gale announces his safe arrival, and gives his brother directions about some money for his wife. The second, six months later, refers to a draft of five thousand dollars to be invested for the use of his wife Agnes. The third, three months later, refers to another draft of the same amount, to be disposed of in the same way. The fourth acknowledges the receipt of news of the birth of his daughter, and incloses a draft of five hundred dollars for his wife. The fifth letter speaks of his being engaged in the opium trade, and making a great deal of money, and incloses a draft for his wife for one thousand dollars. The sixth letter speaks of the plague breaking out in Canton, and that his family can not join him for the present, as he had anticipated, and sends a draft of one thousand dollars for his wife. The seventh notifies his brother that he is coming home to take his family out to China with him. The eighth letter is a duplicate written on the eve of his departure from Canton, announcing that he sends this letter in another vessel, with a duplicate draft for sixty thousand dollars."

At this Mr. Lindsay remarked, "I never heard of that before."

"Was it ever communicated to my mother?" asked Vere Saye.

"No," said Mr. Lindsay, "she never heard of it, nor did she ever receive any money except one draft for a thousand and one for five hundred dollars, besides the interest on some amount Charles Gale had invested in bond and mortgage: When the loss of Charles Gale at sea was announced, Mrs. Gale's affairs were put into my hands to settle. I found only enough money to last her about two years. Charles Gale was executor and trustee of the entire estate of Samson Goliath Gale, which had never been divided or settled. He had the right to invest it as he pleased, and my opinion is that he sold out all the stock, and, finding that his brother had invested his funds so profitably in the opium trade, he determined to raise all the money he could and make a fortune in a short time. It was an ill-advised scheme, and the result was, the sea swallowed up everything he had. I was looking about for something by which Mrs. Gale could use her talents for her support, when her enemy, whoever he was, burned her house, with the intention of destroying her and her child."

"Humph!" ejaculated Vere Saye, "a queer kettle of fish! I'm

afraid, Mr. Lindsay, I shall have to give in to your theory, for I believe that Providence only can unravel this mystery."

"Providence will do it, sir," said the lawyer, "if it has but half a chance."

"Provided you and I work together to point out the chances," said Vere Saye. "There is one thing, Mr. Lindsay, to which I wish to draw your attention. Why was Morton so excited at the mention of the name of Gale?" Then he related how pale and excited Mr. Morton had seemed on one occasion when his son had mentioned the rescue from the water of a young lady by that name. Then he described the scene in the library as seen by Chic—Morton's indecision about burning the letters, and his putting them away in the secret box again; then his return with a pan to burn the papers, and his ravings when he found they had disappeared. Vere Saye repeated the minutest circumstance that Chic had related, and when he had finished his story he asked, "Why did Mr. Morton keep these old letters so many years, and why did he, all at once, wish to destroy them?"

"When men commit a crime," said Mr. Lindsay, "in nine times out of ten they retain something which is sure to be evidence against them. There is some fascination which impels them to do so. Murderers have been arrested with empty purses in their pockets taken from their victims. One will keep a watch, another will wear a gold ring, and I once heard of a case where a set of false teeth were found on a murderer, which he intended at some time to sell for the gold. In my experience I have found many cases where people have kept letters that have compromised them. It is one of the ways provided by Providence for bringing criminals to justice."

"Do you not think it would save trouble," said Vere Saye, "if Providence would induce men not to commit crime? It seems to me that would be the easiest method of getting along."

Mr. Lindsay was busy examining the papers, and did not seem to hear this last remark.

"One thing is certain," continued Vere Saye, "this Morton has possession of all Charles Gale's money and papers, or Charles Gale—" Here he stopped.

"Perhaps," said Mr. Lindsay, "Charles Gale drew bills of exchange on Canton, obtaining the drafts from Mr. Morton, and, the drafts not having been drawn, Morton kept the money and took no steps to find the heirs. There is an amount of over a hundred

thousand dollars involved in this, including the money that belonged to Samson Goliath's estate."

"That idea never struck me," said Vere Saye. "It was a providential thought of yours. We will follow the idea up; but how to get at Mr. Morton's bank-books is more than I can work out just at present. But we must act on the *festina lente* principle; and after all, Mr. Lindsay, we will have to trust a good deal to Providence."

"You'll find it best to do so," said Mr. Lindsay, laughing.

"Now," said Vere Saye, "I think we both understand this matter as far as we have gone, and having fairly hold of one end of the rope, it will be queer if we can't find the other. Suppose you come and lunch with me, after which I will take a carriage and go to Manchester. I am anxious to view the place where I was born, and from which myself and brother were stolen. It may refresh my memory."

Mr. Lindsay took Vere Saye to the Merchants' Club, and, after a good repast, the latter started for Manchester.

The day was a cool one in November. The roads were good, and the horses willing, so that Vere Saye enjoyed his ride. When he reached the inn at Manchester he had a good appetite for supper. As it was too late to do anything that evening, he went to bed and slept soundly, but at six o'clock next morning he was up and on his way to visit the site of Gale House.

It would be difficult to describe the sensations that came over the young man as he stood by the ruins of the house where he was born, and where the early associations of his life were centered.

Little remained but the cellar-hole of the mansion. Most of the stone had been carted away for building material, when not too much damaged by fire.

Vere Saye strove in vain to recall the place to his remembrance, but he was too young when taken away to retain on his mind any impression of the surroundings. He stood upon the cliff, and looked out upon the sea; but the cliff was like a hundred others that he had seen, and the sea like the sea elsewhere.

If he had remembered anything, it would have been the beautiful prospect from the extreme elevation of Gale's Point. The coast to the westward, dotted as far as Salem with white cottages, on which the morning sun was shining, and Marblehead, and numerous picturesque islets rising from the sea, made a very beautiful picture. To the northward stretched a wide expanse of charming

country, and to the eastward lay Cape Ann, with its bold, rocky shore, forbidding in its aspect to the mariner, and warning him not to venture too near by day or night.

There are few finer views along the New England coast, and as Vere Saye glanced from one point of the compass to the other, he could not but admit that his grandfather had an eye for the picturesque as well as for whales.

He lingered a while over the neglected graves of Samson Goliath and Betsy Jane. The tombstones were still upright and the names legible, though defaced by the rude violence of the storms. "Ah!" said he, "the day will come when your memory will be more honored than it is now."

While Vere Saye was musing over the graves, an elderly man approached and saluted him politely. "Be ye lookin' at old Samson Goliath's grave?" asked he. "Well, there's lots o' people comes here with one eye on the graves and the other on the beautiful prospect, as they would like to be the owners of, but no one can buy this ere place, cos if the heirs is livin' they can't be found, and a lawyer up to Bosting sends down the taxes regular every year." The old fellow went on with an account of the Gale family, the destruction of the house, and the other events with which the reader is acquainted.

Vere Saye listened patiently to the man's narrative. "The day arter the burnin' of the house," he continued, "I was lookin' around when I picked up a gold sleeve-button in the snow. I have carried it ever since, hopin' some day to turn it over to the lawful heirs. If you know of any of 'em livin' I'll be obliged to you if you'll let me know their whereabouts." He took from his neck a little bag, from which he produced a large button, with the initials C. M. engraved upon it.

Vere Saye looked carefully at the button. "Just as I supposed," he said to himself. "Morton dropped it in his retreat—one of Mr. Lindsay's special providences that would convict him before any jury." Then he said to the old man, "I know the heirs, and this thing is important to them. I will give you ten dollars for keeping it so faithfully."

"Well," said the man, "I want 'em to git it, and I think I deserve somethin' for takin' care of the sleeve-button so long; but I must have a receipt."

Vere Saye pocketed the button, then wrote a receipt on a blank leaf of his note-book, and signed it "Charles Gale."

The man looked at the name signed to the paper, and then gazed in astonishment at Vere Saye. "I declare," he exclaimed, "you must be one of the boys as was missin', but you've growed a heap since the night I saw you at the circus with your old grandpa."

"Never mind who I am," said Vere Saye, "I have a right to the button; but don't mention this meeting to any one until I give you leave."

He then departed from the spot, the old man gazing after him and remarking his great size and splendid proportions. "We've none like that about these parts," he said; and, shouldering his fishing apparatus, went on his way.

Vere Saye stopped in Boston only long enough to communicate with Mr. Lindsay and show him the button, relating the circumstances connected with it. "You will begin to believe there is such a thing as a Providence," said the old lawyer. "Here is the name of Bullion & Co. on the under side. Perhaps the jeweler's books will tell to whom this button was sold, and when C. M. was engraved upon it."

"There is no doubt of one thing," said Vere Saye; "Morton was at the fire, and was alone, and dropped this button. We have him in our power. Now, sir, I must bid you good-by and return to New York to make the acquaintance of my mother."

Having obtained Mrs. Gale's address from Mr. Lindsay, Vere Saye departed at once for New York. On his arrival after a toilsome journey, he proceeded at once to Mrs. Gale's lodgings in John Street.

His heart beat with an emotion he had never before experienced. He was now twenty-eight years of age, and could not remember ever having known a mother's love. He wondered how she would receive him, whether with joy or distrust, although he had letters of identification with him from Mr. Lindsay.

He stood some minutes at the door before he raised the knocker, but, when the knocker fell, the hollow sound that echoed through the house had something ominous in it that made his heart jump. "What if they are not here?" he said to himself, and a cold perspiration stood on his forehead.

It seemed an age before the slatternly maid came to the door; and, to his question whether Mrs. and Miss Samson were at home, the answer was, "They left here yesterday mornin' for parts unbeknownst, and took all their baggage with 'em."

A straw would have knocked him down, he was so disappointed.

He asked for the landlady, who informed him that Mrs. and Miss Samson had left town to be absent some time, and left no address. Vere Saye made minute inquiries about how they went, and in what direction. The servant-girl, who seemed to be an observing person, described the hack, with one gray and one bay horse, driven by a white man accompanied by another, who lashed the trunks on behind. The two men had nothing in particular to distinguish them, and the trunks, of the ordinary leather pattern, were merely marked with a large "S" painted on the ends.

That was about all Vere Saye could learn in spite of his questions, and he departed greatly disheartened, leaving his address, so that he could be informed in case they returned.

He called at Mr. Bernard's office, and learned that he was absent from the city, and the office-boy was not certain when he would return.

Vere Saye had but one resource—to join Flossy up the river, and the next evening he was sitting at her side on Mrs. Eton's back porch, the running vines covering the veranda and shutting them out from the rest of the household. This was called the Lovers' Nest, and Mrs. Eton was too wise to let any one intrude there.

Later in the evening Vere Saye and Flossy appeared on the front porch, and joined the rest of their friends in the arguments that were going on.

Harry Morton was there, looking sad and weary, and Vere Saye pitied the young man when he remembered what a blow he would have to deal to his family. "How they will all hate me after that!" thought Vere Saye; "but I must see justice done, though the heavens fall."

Vere Saye had noticed the affection subsisting between his sister and Harry, and had thought what a handsome pair they were, and how much happiness was in store for them, but now it could not be. The match would be broken off at the first blow he struck, and his little sister would hate him for separating her from the man she loved. "Better," he thought, "that I had gone through life as I commenced it—without a name, a wanderer on the earth."

In the course of the evening Vere Saye spoke to Harry Morton about little *Bene Trovato*, saying that he had found a deaf and dumb asylum where they would teach him to speak. "Let me have him for a time," said he, "and I will return him to you with the highest attribute of man conferred upon him, without which he is little superior to the orang-outang."

Harry pointed out the difficulty of getting the boy away from his sister, but Vere Saye replied, "I think she will enter at once into my plan. She is so unselfish that she would rejoice at her little *protégé's* gaining the power of speech." It turned out as he expected. Angeline consented, and *Bene Trovato* was made ready for the change in his circumstances.

Since the troubles had come upon the Mortons, Angeline had been the mainstay of the family. She had developed in a short time into a girl of strong character, with all the sweetness of a child combined with the maturity of womanly character. The blossoms that bloomed on the bough just budding into life were no sweeter than before, but the leaves had expanded, and threw their fragrance out upon the morning air. The heart was just as fresh as ever it was, but it had been touched with sorrow for the first time, and for the moment the refreshing dew of youth had dried up. Her soul was full of balm now, which she would infuse into the hearts of others. Her cheerful smile was the only thing in the house that brought sunshine with it. Her mother would say twenty times a day, "Angeline, darling, what would life be without you?"

CHAPTER XLV.

A NEW SCHEME.

LET us now return to Mr. Morton, whom we left, in a deplorable condition, lying on the floor with his wife supporting his head.

Morton felt that he was on the eve of being held up to public scorn, for he asked himself, "Why have I been watched, and my papers stolen?" Morton had, no doubt, committed a crime that had overshadowed his whole life; yet in the estimation of the world no one stood higher. If he headed any enterprise there would be twice as many subscribers as were wanted, and altogether there was no more "solid man" in the city of New York. "How can I give up all this honor and wealth," he cried, "and live?"

Mrs. Morton had the most unbounded confidence in her husband, and no one could make her believe that he had committed a crime. With her he was the soul of honor; she thought him superior to all mankind. She loved him with a love that had never

been excelled. She would have forsaken all the world to live in a desert island with him, where they would not see a human face, had it been necessary.

Mr. Morton had one good quality at least to redeem him from detestation—his love for his wife. He was cold to the world, somewhat indifferent to his children, but he loved his wife with the fervor of his youth. He was always happy in her society, and she was the only being to whom he ever gave his confidence. When with her alone he would throw off care and be the same lover as at twenty-five.

He had always confided a great deal in her judgment, and never omitted consulting her when anything troubled him. How was he to account to her for this change of trust, when she saw that he was in a dreadful morbid condition, and in constant alarm at every shadow that fell across his path? What must she think of all his actions, which could not help coming under her notice? She would suspect him of some wrong, and her fears would magnify his faults. He was so accustomed to making his wife his confidante that he felt as if the world had deserted him when he could not go to her, and then he thought of her disappointment and distress when she found that he had not confided his troubles to her, as if she were unworthy his confidence and trust.

It took Mrs. Morton several hours to get her husband in a frame of mind to tell her what his troubles were. He felt it the only safe course for him to pursue, but he did not tell her all—only that he had been guilty of a great breach of trust; that money put into his hands years ago had accumulated so that he owed his large fortune and present position to it; that there were persons in pursuit of this money which they never would have found trace of but for some letters that were stolen from him that evening; that, if it could be shown that he owed his fortune to the money intrusted to his care, he would have to give up the whole, which would mean beggary and disgrace, if not imprisonment; that there was only one hope for him to elude or buy off the claimants, which was to make over his property to his wife, or transfer his funds to Europe, where he could live in comfort for the rest of his days.

Mr. Morton never once thought of restitution. "After all these years of hard work," he would say, "when I have accumulated a fortune to comfort those I love, it would be death to me to give it up and see my wife and children beggars." He never troubled himself about the two helpless women whom he had consigned to

poverty for over twenty years, while he and his were living in splendor on what rightfully belonged to them.

He had lost all sense of honor as far as this money was concerned, and, as he babbled to his wife about his sorrows and troubles, he never thought what daggers he was thrusting into her heart every time he uttered a complaint. He forgot that in all her life she had never heard the word fraud connected with his name; he only thought of the fond wife who would soothe him and pet him when he was sick or depressed, and never looked up to see how horror-stricken she was.

He had simply told her he was guilty of a breach of trust. Had he told her that through him the sweet girl who had been lately under his roof had from childhood been obliged to work for her living, while he was enjoying her wealth, it would have killed her.

As Mrs. Morton listened to her husband's whinings she felt as if the world were slipping from under her. She could not speak. Her throat was choked with something she thought would kill her; she thought she should die on the spot. The scales had fallen from her eyes, and, after a quarter of a century of love and confidence, she found herself, as it were, on an arid desert, without a drop of water with which to quench her thirst.

Mr. Morton raised his eyes to hers, wondering why she did not speak. Instead of the sweet face he had loved, he saw before him a woman stricken with age, her face rigid with pain, her eyes dry and burning with agony, and her whole expression so changed that he would not have recognized her had he met her anywhere else. She looked like some poor creature that had lost everything that was worth living for, and had been stricken with loss of speech.

She opened her mouth, but no sound came forth; she appealed to her husband with her eyes, and he understood her. He thought she was dying, and that the last prop was about to be knocked from under him. He took her in his arms, but she was as rigid as a corpse. She seemed to wish to say something, but her tongue refused to utter. Her eyes looked so distressed that it would have been a blessing to see her shed a tear.

Mr. Morton pressed his wife to his bosom. There was no response, and he cried in agony, "Oh! wife of my soul, forgive me!"

She then spoke in a broken, helpless way, "I will, but give up all," and tears came to her relief. He had not told her half, and, now that the fiat had gone forth, he dared not tell her more; had she known all his sin she would have died on the spot. She blamed

herself now for one act of her life—when she had yielded to her husband's importunities in a case where she felt there was something wrong ; yet all things had gone as he said they would, and she had become reconciled to it in time.

But now the whole effect of her weakness stood out before her, and she felt as if she bore half his sin. She forgave him, but with the condition that he should give up all.

They talked together long and earnestly, and Mrs. Morton led her husband to kneel down and pray with her, and made him promise to find the heirs and make restitution.

He did not tell her that he knew of any living heirs, and in his heart was still devising means to deceive her, although he felt that he would never again see in her the cheerful companion that had journeyed with him for so many years, but instead a broken-hearted woman grown old before her time, stricken down in one short hour.

Early the next morning Mr. Morton departed for New York. He went directly to the Battery, and hired a very small steamer and went off in her. In three hours he reached his destination—a farmhouse near the shore, prettily situated and comfortably furnished. There were ten acres of good land attached to the place ; it was stocked with a horse, a cow, and everything necessary for a small place.

Mr. Morton made a liberal offer to the owner to move out that day, and have the house ready for new occupants by the next morning. The offer was accepted. Leaving an agent, whom he had brought from New York, on the premises to attend to everything, Mr. Morton returned to the city, keeping the little steamer in his employ for the next day.

He went from the Battery to the house where Mrs. Samson lived in John Street, and, finding that lady absent and not expected back for an hour, he sent up his card to Mary, who came down to see him. He took Mary by the hand, which he had never done but once before. Then an electric shock shattered his nerves ; now her hand almost burned him with its soft, velvet touch. Mr. Morton had a part to play, and he determined to go through with it. He spoke rapidly and nervously, and looked as if he was ready at any moment to run away.

"I come on two errands, Miss Samson," said the banker ; "you left my house without my settling with you ; do me the favor to accept this check for half a year's salary ; it is your due."

Mary objected to receiving pay except for the time she was at

Morton villa, but he insisted on her doing so, and she was forced to comply.

"You will want it all, young lady," he said, "and I come now from Mrs. Morton, who loves you as if you were her own daughter, to say that you must not only do as I recommend, and as she begs you to do, but must consider her your almoner for the future. I have painful news for you, Miss Samson, and regret to be the bearer of it. So many unfortunate events occurred at Hawks' Roost during the last month that my nerves are completely shattered, and there seems to be no end of trouble. I am a poor hand to convey bad news, but I must tell you, first, that we have lost that noble gentleman, Ware Conrad, who died at Mrs. Eton's house three days ago of pyæmia and distress of mind. His venerable father came on and took the body to his home in Virginia."

Mary was very much shocked at this news. She admired and respected Conrad, and thought it hard he should die so young. She had heard vague rumors of his connection with the murder, and even while lying sick in bed she would say, "Oh, no, not he! He could not do such a deed; he is too kind." She did not know that Conrad had been sent to jail, and that but for Mrs. Eton's kindness he would have died there.

"I was in hopes," said Mr. Morton, "that with Commander Conrad's death there would be an end to any further questions concerning the murder, but it seems the law must have a victim. Conrad was no sooner dead than he stood acquitted in the public mind, and they commenced looking for some one else on whom to lay the charge of murder. What I have to tell you, Miss Samson, is very painful for me to utter, and for you to hear." He looked steadily at Mary, who turned pale as marble.

"What could he mean?" she thought; "why that ominous look?"

"I assure you," continued Mr. Morton, "that nothing but the kind interest Mrs. Morton takes in you, and a regard for your safety, would have induced me to undertake the task imposed upon me. Mrs. Morton would have come with me, but the charge against you prostrated her completely, and I left her in a very critical condition. 'Go,' she said, 'and remove Mary to a place of safety.'"

"Charge against me?" exclaimed Mary, gasping for breath. "Take me to a place of safety!" she said, approaching Mr. Morton, trembling in every limb. "Oh! tell me, Mr. Morton, what it is

with which I am charged, for I am as innocent of any fault as a babe. Of what do they accuse me ?

"I am not fit for such a mission as this," said Mr. Morton. "My dear child, you must help me to be courageous, for I am but a nervous invalid at best."

"Tell me at once, sir, what it is that I have to fear. Oh, that mother or Mr. Bernard were here !"

At the mention of Mr. Bernard Mr. Morton started. "Who is Mr. Bernard, my dear ?" he inquired.

"My guardian, who has looked after me from childhood, and with whom I consult before doing anything."

"It is better that neither your mother nor guardian should know anything of this matter," said Mr. Morton ; "it would pain your mother so much to hear of the charge that is made against you. Have you told her all the circumstances connected with Edgar Lane's murder ?"

"No," replied Mary, "I kept it all from her, for fear of causing her pain."

"It might tell against you if it were known that you had kept the story of the murder to yourself ; yet, no doubt, it would have greatly distressed Mrs. Mary Samson."

"My mother's name is Agnes, sir," Mary explained.

Mr. Morton had adroitly found out what he wanted to know. He was satisfied now that Mrs. Samson was Agnes Gale, and this her daughter Mary—a fact of which he had been almost certain for some time.

How did he know but that the appearance of Mary Gale—otherwise Samson—was not part of a plot to bring him to terms ? Certain it was, all his troubles had commenced when she appeared, and papers that had lain twenty years quietly in a box had never been troubled till her arrival at his house. "Yet," he said to himself, "she looks so innocent, I may be mistaken ; but it is certainly an extraordinary coincidence. But," he thought, "who in the world would suspect me, yet I am steeped to the lips in crime ? No, I'll trust no one ; looks are not to be relied on." So he made up his mind what course to pursue.

Mr. Morton had brought the girl now to a point where she was almost beside herself with fear at being called upon to answer to a serious charge, and she looked at Mr. Morton with pleading eyes, as if to ask him to explain the trouble.

"Miss Samson," he said, "remember that none of your friends

at Hawks' Roost could ever be brought to believe anything to your discredit. If I did not trust in you implicitly, I would not be here to help you; but the testimony against you is so strong and so closely woven that it will require all the power of your friends to extricate you from that which threatens you. The first object is to get you removed to a place where you can lie concealed, and avoid the risk of being arrested."

Mary sprang forward and fell on her knees before Mr. Morton. "Arrest me, sir?" she cried, raising her beautiful eyes piteously to his; "what have I done that any one could arrest me?"

"Patience, my dear Miss Samson; listen to me. Time is precious. If you could be removed out of the way for a little while, until your friends could prepare a plan of defense and circumvent the villains who are plotting against you, everything would pass off smoothly and without the knowledge of the world; but if you should be arrested and thrown into jail, no matter how innocent you might be, you would stand half condemned in the estimation of mankind."

"But, sir," exclaimed Mary, looking horrified, "how can I be imprisoned when I have done no wrong? I go to prison! That would kill my mother; it would be the worst blow we ever received. May God in his mercy protect us!"

"Remember, Miss Samson," resumed Mr. Morton, "that your friends don't believe a word against you, and for that reason they do not want you to go to prison. I told you that the law was never satisfied until it had found a victim. Death removed Conrad from the clutches of the law. Few believed in his guilt, or believed he was on the ground when Edgar Lane was murdered." Mary shuddered. "You ought to know," continued Mr. Morton; "did *you* see him there?"

"No, he was not there."

"But you were. The situation you were in after the murder prevented your examination. The boy Chic exonerated you, and the murder was fixed on Commander Conrad. Now, Chic has mysteriously disappeared, and is nowhere to be found, therefore can not testify in your favor, and a strange man has been to see me who says that the murder was committed—"

Mary sat looking at Mr. Morton with her eyes starting out of her head; she felt that something dreadful was about to be stated to her, but she could not imagine what it was. "Speak, sir, for God's sake!" she said, "and do not keep me in suspense longer."

"It is a hard thing to utter ; but think how it will distress your mother if this is made public ; think of the newspapers parading the news in their columns for all New York to gloat over—'The arrest and imprisonment of the murderess of Edgar Lane.'"

Mary gave one spring, and fell, apparently dead, upon the floor. Mr. Morton thought at first that he had killed her. He rushed for water, and dashed a tumblerful in her face. "No use of *one* dying," he muttered, "unless they both go. That's the only thing that will free me."

He waited patiently for Mary to revive. She was dazed, and could not exactly take in the situation at first. When at last she came fully to her senses, she cried, in a most piteous tone, "Did you say that they would arrest me as a murderess ? Is it Edgar Lane they say I murdered, when I ran to save his life ? O mother ! mother ! this will break your heart !" And she sobbed so that she could not speak.

"Now, Miss Samson," said Mr. Morton, "don't take this matter so seriously ; it all rests with yourself whether any ill results will come to you from this charge. The first thing to do is to place you out of reach of arrest. The man who brings the charge against you is doubtless a blackmailer, who expects to make money out of the transaction. He expects a large sum for his silence, for he could weave together a tissue of lies that would tell strongly against you. I see all the misery you and your mother would have to undergo ; for, even if acquitted, you would not be exonerated. This man's tale is specious ; he has told it to me, and, though I know it is all a lie, yet he would impose upon a jury. Your youth and beauty would be in your favor, and no money would be spared to relieve you, but then there would be the arrest and imprisonment in a dismal jail ; then a long trial, where all the ingenuity of the district attorney would be taxed to prove you the murderess of Edgar Lane. Months would pass before this would end. Let me place you out of the reach of this blackmailer ; give me time to deal with him, put detectives on his track, so that I can run him to his hole, and I will insure that no charge of any kind will ever be brought against you. Your mother need not know it even ; all that you have to do is to tell her that it is necessary for you to go away for a time in concealment, by advice of your friends ; that you will explain all to her when you arrive at your place of destination. She has such confidence in you that she will not hesitate a moment to leave the city, and in three hours you will reach your destination

—a farm-house overlooking the sea, where you will have every comfort you could desire. I can not feel easy until I know you are away. You must not even let your guardian know, and there must be no excitement over your departure; things must be conducted as if nothing was the matter. There will be a carriage at the door for you and your mother and your baggage at seven o'clock to-morrow morning. My agent will come with the carriage, and will conduct you to the place where you are to reside for the present. Now, will you go, or must we resort to some less safe expedient to serve you?"

"I am in your hands," replied Mary, "to do with as you please. My guardian has gone to Boston, and will not be back for a week. I have no one to consult with but you, and, of course, will be guided by your counsel. What better friend could I have?"

"None," said the banker, "for Mrs. Morton is devoted to you, to say nothing of the affection I feel for you myself. Now, I have but an hour to reach the boat, and must be back to Hawks' Roost to-morrow to meet this blackmailer in the woods. He may want to rob and murder me for what I know, but I will endeavor to be prepared for him. Now, good-by; leave not a clew behind you. Tell your landlady you have gone to visit a friend in the country; but don't fail to go to the minute. This scoundrel by some means has your address, but I will fool him."

Without offering his hand, Mr. Morton hurriedly withdrew.

Half an hour afterward Agnes returned from her daily employment, and found her daughter engaged in packing trunks. She had studied the situation after Mr. Morton's departure, and came to the conclusion that she was in a terrible dilemma, and that Mr. Morton's advice was very good. She thanked God that she had such kind friends to stand by her in her hour of need. What Mrs. Morton recommended Mary felt must be for the best, and, although Mr. Morton had by no means impressed her as favorably as his wife, he stood too high in the community for her to doubt him. Indeed, such an idea never entered her mind. She believed in him as implicitly as if he had been an angel from heaven, and determined to obey him to the utmost extent. She saw that there was a good deal of preparation necessary, as Mr. Morton had mentioned two or three months, but Mary and her mother were used to hurried packing and fleeing from unknown enemies; so when Agnes came in she found her daughter in her room with the trunks all open, and articles of clothing lying about on the chairs and sofa.

"Why, darling," exclaimed her mother, "what are you doing? Are we going a journey, child, that you are packing these trunks?"

Mary embraced her mother, as was her custom even if they had been separated but an hour. "Yes," she answered, "you dear old inquisitive mamma, we are going a journey, and will have to start early to-morrow morning. That's the reason I am commencing to pack now. You will have so many other things to do, and this is my department. You are not strong enough to pack trunks, while I am as strong as a young horse."

"But tell me, darling, whither are we going, and what does it all mean?"

"My own darling mamma," said Mary, "have you sufficient confidence in me to trust yourself blindly to me, and let me take you a few hours' journey from the city, without your asking any questions? When we get to our place of destination I will tell you everything. At present I will only say that I am acting under the advice of Mr. and Mrs. Morton, and that it is necessary for our safety. You know we have some secret enemy, mamma, so that we can not even bear our own name. Won't you trust your own pet?"

"Yes, darling," replied Agnes, "and without asking a question until you think proper to enlighten me. It's not the first sudden move that I have made. My life has been one of alarms and precipitate journeys. I only wish all this mystery was cleared up, and that we could settle down somewhere in peace."

"We are going to a nice farm, darling mamma—one overlooking the sea, where Mr. Morton tells me we will have every comfort, and nothing to do; so I am packing up my drawing-materials and music-books. There may be a piano there."

"My dear child," said Agnes, "I am sure that this is some very serious matter, and you are trying to make light of it. There are traces of tears on your cheeks. You could not conceal from me anything of a serious nature to save your life."

"Ah! darling mamma," replied Mary, "you do not know what a deceitful child I can be when I choose. I have concealed several things from you that I ought not to have done, but I will make a clean breast of it when we reach the farm-house, and never have a thought apart from you again."

"You little goosey," said her mother, kissing her, "I don't believe you ever had a thought apart from me. I am sure if you should ever lose your heart to some fine fellow, that I should be the

first one you would tell; you wouldn't let a night go over your head without confiding it to me."

Mary blushed deeply at her mother's remark, but as she leaned over the trunks Agnes did not notice it. "Oh," said Mary to herself, "what a deceitful girl I am growing to be! I shall be so glad when we get to the farm, where I can open my heart to mamma. I know she will forgive me for keeping my little secret to myself. It is so sweet to keep such a secret all to one's self. I suppose I feel something as Columbus did when he discovered a new world, or as the Indian did who first saw the falls of Niagara; only I don't believe there is anybody in the world that loves as I do. I am sure I can safely tell mamma, for she will enter into all my feelings. Mamma, you have nothing to do with packing, but you must not forget that you have some twenty-five notes to write to your pupils, telling them that necessity compels you to leave town, and that you can not keep your engagements for this quarter."

"What! for the quarter, Mary?" exclaimed Agnes. "How they will all grumble and say it is an imposition! and that they will take some other teacher, forgetting all the extra hours I have given them. Ah, me! but this is a hard world, darling; may you never be compelled to buffet against it as I have."

"Won't you enjoy looking out on the sea, mamma, after being cooped up here in the city for so long a time? It will bring the roses back to those pale cheeks of yours. You will gain flesh, and we will be so happy," and Mary went on with her packing, almost forgetting her troubles in the pleasurable anticipation of spending some time with her mother looking out upon the sea.

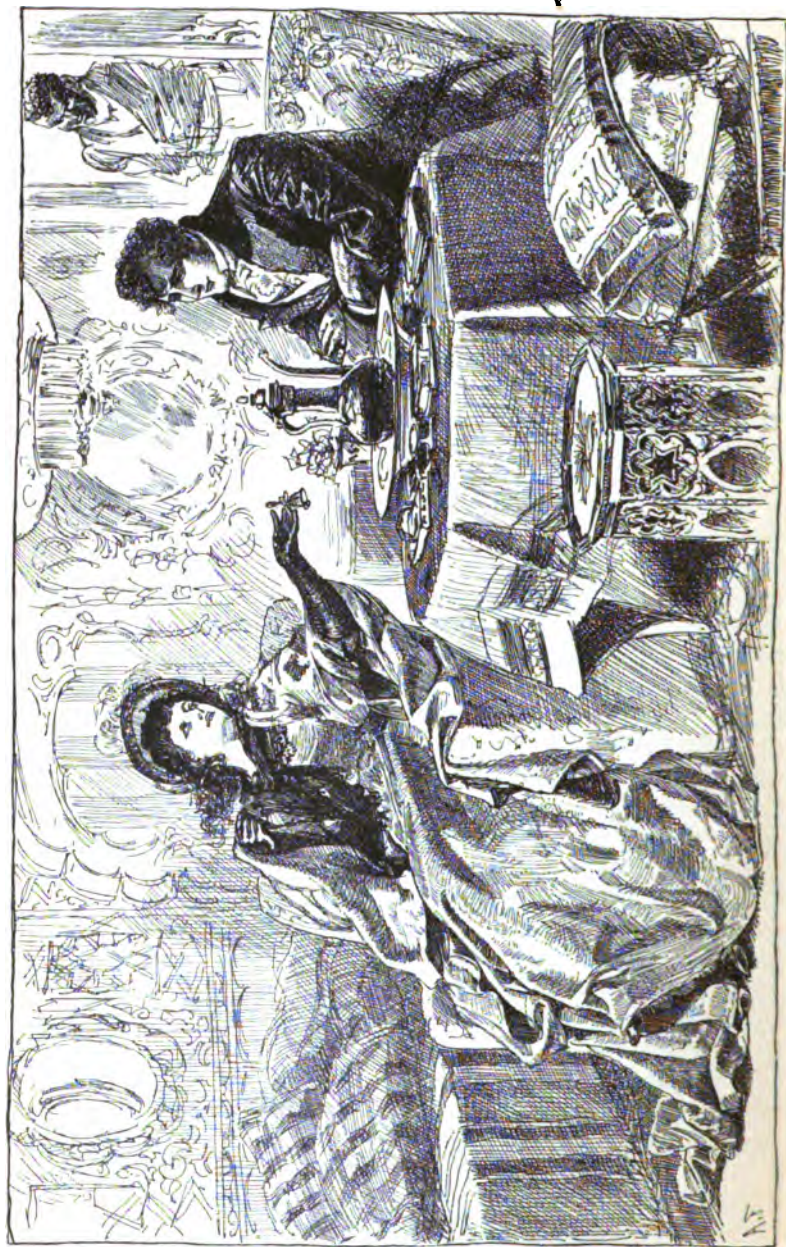
They merely told their landlady in the morning that they were going to the country for a short time, and would write when about to return. Agreeably to Mr. Morton's instructions, they gave no clew as to where they were going.

Precisely at seven o'clock, a large hack drove up to the door. A man sat beside the driver, who jumped down, ran up-stairs, and, picking up their trunks, soon had them lashed behind the carriage. The ladies then entered, and the vehicle drove to Pier No. 2, North River, where a small steamer, with steam up, was ready to start.

The trunks were put on board; the ladies followed with Mr. Morton's agent, and the steamer went rapidly down the bay. It was a lovely morning, with a crisp and bracing air.

"Mamma," said Mary, "this will be very beneficial to you, and I want but one thing to make me happy."

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"Tell the first officer," she said to the messenger who answered the summons. "to get under way for Europe.
I command this vessel!"

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CHAPTER XLVI.

DEVILLE'S INFATUATION.

DURING Louise Morton's confinement to her room, Deville did not fail to call twice a day and inquire for her, and on each occasion he took her a handsome bouquet, which he sent up with his remembrance. But Louise never deigned to send him even a message in acknowledgment of his kindness, although she knew that he was perhaps the only person that gave her a kindly thought.

But, on the day before the family were to leave for New York, Louise sent word to Deville that if he would wait in the parlor she would come down and see him. How his heart beat at this announcement! He expected nothing—he felt that she might even treat him with scorn, trampling on his feelings as she had so often done before, or play with him as women like her do with men whom they wish to keep in chains, dangling around them just to feed their vanity. There are plenty of such women whose delight it is to keep men under their dominion, feeding them with false hopes, and leading them on to destruction. Such women are like the wretches that raise false lights on shore to lure a vessel to destruction among the breakers.

When Louise entered the parlor, Deville was struck dumb at the sight of her beauty. She was dressed with evident care, yet with *abandon*, and looked the embodiment of voluptuousness. She had adopted every artifice that would beguile a man's senses and bring him to her feet. Her beautiful arms were bare to the shoulders, and with her bare neck and shoulders she displayed a voluptuous bust. There was only the slightest semblance of a net gauze thrown over her charms. Her paleness only added to her beauty, while the quivering flames of passion seemed to dart from her eyes, consuming all upon whom they looked.

Deville bowed his head as she approached, and felt her breath upon his cheek before he dared to gaze upon so much beauty.

Louise touched his arm. "Do you," she said, "love me as much as this, that you should risk losing the friendship of those who scorn me?"

"Have I ever failed in my devotion to you?" he inquired. "Have I not always come to you when permitted, and gone away

when you bid me depart ? Have I lived for anything except to please you ? ”

“ If you had a pet bird,” said Louise, “ and saw it fly to the bosom of another, would you not try to lure it back ? ”

“ Not unless it would come back willingly. I would trust it to know who loved it best, but, if it really did not love me, it would be just as well it should go to another. If it came back tired and hungry, I would care for it, and take it to my heart again if it desired to nestle there.”

“ When you saw me fluttering around a trap baited with tempting food,” said Louise, “ why did you not put forth your hand and pull me back ? Why did you let me fall into the hands of an enemy ? If you loved me as you have professed to do, why did you not look after me and try to lure me back ? Why let that man, with his arts and snares, his wiles and graces, tempt me to be faithless to you ? Have you forgotten the story of Eve’s weakness, whom Satan beguiled from her husband’s side by the offer of the forbidden fruit ? There’s a deeper meaning in the allegory than most people imagine. Woman is a weak vessel, easily lured from the path of duty ; man owes it to her to use all the power of his love to bring her back again.

“ If he has failed in anything he should redeem himself at once in her eyes. You are the cause of all my troubles. I was simply polite to Conrad, and you turned your back upon me and avoided me. It was as much as if you had said, ‘ You must not be polite to a stranger in your father’s house.’ ”

“ But—” interrupted Deville.

“ What was I,” continued Louise, without heeding the interruption, “ but a young girl just launched upon the world, flattered with attentions, and not yet ready to give up the pleasures of the world to tie myself for life to a man whom I had only known six months ? Were you not willing that I should see if I could fly ? I had never trimmed my feathers to see if I could breast the gale. I had spent my life fitting through the branches of the trees and watching the beauties of the parterres. I saw above the hedge a glimpse of the great world, with mountains, lakes, and rivers, and a subtle Satan at my side tempting me to roam the world with him, to climb the mountain-tops, and behold the world lying at my feet. Did you, seeing all this, try to snatch your pet bird back from the abyss into which she was falling ? ”

“ My God ! ” exclaimed Deville, “ am I then so much to blame ? ”

Would you have permitted me to utter a single word of warning? How could I warn you against one whom I, in common with everybody else, considered a paragon of a man, and our superior in all that would go to please a woman's heart?"

"How little you know of a woman's heart, to think it could be won by such a popinjay—a man of shallow intellect and incessant talk! You may often have noticed as churches empty out how much faster people escape the emptier the church becomes. The grain runs faster through the hopper when the quantity is small. A man that talks much must say foolish things; but tell me, Deville, if you saw your pet dog going with another sportsman, would you not whistle him back?"

"He might be far beyond the sound of my voice. If I noticed him, perhaps he would stretch his legs, and then run home to me. I would always caress him when he came back."

"Ah! yes, but why let him run and risk having his skin torn with thorns, his feet maimed with briars? Look at this poor hand, all cut and rent. I owe even this to you!"

He knelt before her and took the wounded hand in his, touching it reverently with his lips. "Poor hand!" he exclaimed, "for every thorn that's pierced you and every drop of blood that's spilt, I'll shed a thousand from my loving heart!"

"Ah! yes," she said, "now you have seen the mischief you have done! But would you, two weeks ago, seeing a viper coiling itself and ready to strike its fangs into my heart, have risen and killed the reptile?"

"You can not apply such a name to him," said Deville. "If a reptile gets in one's path it is easy to step aside."

"Cold, calculating man!" exclaimed Louise, "you have not the courage to drive the snake away! How could you expect me to give my most valuable possession—my heart—to you, when you had not strength of will to claim your own? You never loved me!"

"By all that's sacred in heaven or holy on earth," exclaimed Deville, "I never loved any woman but you. You are part of my life, and I will love you until death takes my soul from earth. I would wed you if you had a thousand sins to answer for, and had all the world against you. I'd condone a million crimes, had you committed them, so that I could only call you mine. I'd run a tilt against the world in arms, so that I could win you in the end."

"And would you trample under foot any one who treated me with scorn? You've strength of arm enough to do the wonders that

Samson did, but have you the spirit to set the world's opinion at defiance?"

"Louise," he exclaimed, "what do you take me for? In all the time I have known you I have had but one ambition—that was to gain your love. When I thought you indifferent and fancied I was a bore to you, I kept out of your way until my company should be more acceptable."

"Do you think that a general should desert the field of battle simply because the enemy unfurls his flag? Ought not a man to contend for the love he desires as well as for any other object in life? If you were contending with another for a prize, and that prize my love, would you give up the contest because you were foolish enough to think I smiled on the other man? The fact is, I was pleased with Commander Conrad until I found he was destitute of principle. He offered me an insult which I resented, and when he came whining to me about an affront he had received from poor Edgar Lane, I gave him the cold shoulder. Every word I swore to before the coroner's jury was true to the best of my belief. He could not take any one's hand there because his was stained with blood."

"But the affidavit he signed before a magistrate," said Deville—"how do you reconcile that?"

"A man who will try to corrupt the purity of a young girl," said Louise, "will lie; a man who commits murder will readily commit perjury to save the honor of his family name; it is the least he could do for them. But do you doubt me still?"

"Doubt *you*? Never! I would believe you, no matter what the world might say; you could commit no wrong in my eyes, and even if you should commit murder, I would count it a virtue in you."

"Then," said Louise, "there is my hand, and I am yours for ever. I will trifle with your feelings no more, and I ask you to forgive me for forgetting even for an instant your devotion. The bird may stray from its mate for a season, but the sight of the hawk will frighten it back again to the one that can protect it."

He clasped her in his arms and imprinted on her lips the first kiss of love. Louise shuddered as she received it. It seemed to her like the corpse of the kisses she once so loved, but there was nothing else left her to do.

And Deville believed all she told him. Could he but have looked into that faithless bosom, which would not even be true to

him in prosperity, and would certainly be false to him in adversity ! The first shock of winter and her love would take wings, and she would laugh at his misery while singing in the gilded cage of some wealthy paramour.

But Deville was at last happy, and could bid defiance to the misfortunes of life. Louise told him he must go now, for she was nervous and weak, and had braced herself for the interview. Once more he pressed her to his heart, and once more she shuddered ; but Deville knew it not, as with elastic step, and heart beating with such joy as he had never known before, he left her presence.

"It is over," said Louise when he had departed. "It is the best I can do. The world scorns me ; Deville adores me. He has wealth, and will help me work out my revenge, if I need him ; but oh, my God ! he is not my king, for whom I would have died. There is no passion in his eye, for he loves me for qualities I never possessed. But he will not hate me when he knows my crimes ; he would love me, no matter if I were covered with sin. Now let me see who will treat me with scorn !"

The middle of November found the Mortons in New York. Mr. Morton was again at his post in his banking-house, placid as a summer's sea. No one to look at him would suppose that his soul was afflicted with the tortures of the damned. When he sat at his desk he felt all the time as if an officer of the law was about to lay his hand upon him. Calm as he was to the outside world, his life at home was a hell to him. The sight of his wife's pallid face, dim eyes, and shrunken form was a source of perpetual agony. When he tried to soothe her she would say, in piteous tones, "Give up all and let us be happy. It is shameful to be living on the property of others !" She little dreamed to whom the money belonged ; had she done so she would have died.

"I am seeking the heirs," Mr. Morton would answer to her entreaties ; "they shall receive what is theirs to the last penny. We will go away quietly and live on the little that we shall have remaining."

"Let us do so," she would say ; "I can not live in this way. Mine is more than half the sin for yielding as I did."

The Morton house was closed to general visitors, for Mrs. Morton's ill health prevented her receiving company, and vague rumors of affairs at Hawks' Roost contributed to keep people away. Deville was about the only gentleman who visited the house, and he because generally regarded as the accepted lover of Louise.

Deville had informed George May of the result of his interview with Louise. "You are welcome to her, old boy," said May. "I shall love her all my life, but am glad it is you instead of me. I could not feel happy if you were gnawing your vitals out, and I the accepted lover. It is better as it is. I will go away. My profession will give me occupation, and I hope forgetfulness. Perhaps death will come and end me and my disappointments."

CHAPTER XLVII

A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY.

THE day after Vere Saye's arrival at Mr. Etons' cottage George May rose early to take a walk and enjoy the morning air.

May had spent the previous evening at Mrs. Eton's, and watched Vere Saye and Flossy as they came into the parlor from off the porch. There was joy in Flossy's eye that she could not conceal, though Vere Saye was as calm as if he had just risen from the tea-table. Flossy sat down near Mrs. Eton, glancing timidly at her lover. Life to her at that moment seemed like a dream which fulfilled all her highest aspirations. She had embarked on the stream in her frail boat—the Hope—and in her warm imagination the swift current was carrying her on to Elysian Fields.

George May was the first to notice the joy that illumined her countenance. It made him feel sad to think that Flossy had fallen to this large Englishman's lot, who, for aught he knew, might not appreciate her. May had half loved Flossy at times, and, when his heart was heavy with sorrow at the coldness of Louise, he would long to turn to the heart of Flossy.

But, though Flossy always welcomed May with a smile, she never did anything to encourage him to think of her except as a sister. Flossy knew, or had been told often, that May was Louise's property, and she would no more have dared to intrude on her preserves than a poacher would have entered a forbidden park where every tree covered the body of an armed keeper.

May had generally found her in company with Vere Saye—"the huge leviathan," as he called him—"reclining at the foot of a lily,"

and, not wishing to be *de trop*, he would walk away, half envying the Englishman the love this sweet girl seemed to bear him.

May wandered listlessly along this autumn morning toward the great oak, where he intended to rest. He was passing the stable where Patrick O'Donahue, Mr. Morton's coachman, was washing a magnificent pair of dark-bay carriage-horses. O'Donahue removed his hat, and, ducking his head with a gesture intended for a bow, said, "The top of the mornin' to you, Misther May, and it's yer-self that's a godsind to sore eyes; an' it's a life-time since I seen yer honor ter spake ter yer, an sure I gloried in the way yer rode that harse t'other day, an' says I to Mike Flaherty, 'It's himself can do it better nor any man I ever seen,' an' may yer honor never stand in nade ov a harse as can bate the whole universe, that's my wish from the bottom of me heart."

"You are flattering me, Pat, this morning," said May, "but thank you all the same; and here's something to drink my health."

"Thank yer, sir," said Patrick, "an' if I don't drink yer health until I can't see, I'll go back to ould Ireland and live on butter-milk. Mr. May," continued Patrick, "could I depind on you to give me a bit of advice, for I've somethin' on me conscience that won't lave me slape, an' there's no Catholic praste up here, an' divil a one do I know to whom I can tell a grate saycret. If it was not important that it should be known at onst, I could wait until I git back to New York; but I must tell it soon, or I'll be too late, an' there'll be the divil to pay."

"I should feel highly honored with your confidence, Patrick," replied May, "but I hope it's not a long story, for I want to take a walk this morning, it is so pleasant."

"Ah! yis, sir," said Patrick, "this is beautiful weather, thanks be to the saints for it; an' I'll just be bold enough to say, Misther May, that I pity the man who can take his walk on such a mornin', the beautiful trees, red and gold, and the grass green under his feet, and the turf as bootiful as iver I seen in ould Ireland. An' the birds singin' on the trees, an' the beautiful sky lookin' down on us, an' the mountain strames runnin' along to the grate river, tinkling their swate music, an' iverything else in harmony; an' who is there that has any religion but'll see in all this an intelligince greater than iver belonged to man, an' that God an' his son an' all the saints have put their hands upon all these things created for us, an' divil take the man that thinks otherwise. I wouldn't be in his

place for a ship-load ov ther best pertaties that iver come from ould Ireland."

May looked at the coachman in astonishment on hearing these fine sentiments so well expressed. "Why, Patrick," said he, "you are a poet."

"I don't know what I may be, sir," said Patrick, "but I believe in God's marcies, an' try to do what's right, an' for that rason I stopped yer honor this marning ter av my say till ye."

"Say on, my good fellow ; what is it you want me to hear?"

"Ye'll mind Mr. Vere Saye, yer honor, that foine gintleman as is coortin' the beautiful Miss Flossy," said Patrick, straightening himself up after giving his horses a flourishing rubbing. "Be quiet, Topsy, till I talk to the gintleman, an' if yer snort round that fashion I'll bang yer tail an' let the flies have a chance at ye. Well, Mither May, he is a foine-made man, an' handsome at that, but, sir, it's not all goold that glistens. I know that at him that wouldn't do him any good if I tould it. An' if he knew what I know at him, he'd break ivery bone in my body wid dose big fists av his, an' den trow me over the cliffs."

"In the name of Heaven, Patrick, what are you talking about?" said May. "Speak out, or say nothing at all. How dare you hint anything against a gentleman of Mr. Vere Saye's standing in society—a gentleman of the best English family?"

Patrick approached nearer to May. "Did ye ever notice a tiger, sir," he inquired, "lyin' in a cage wid his companions, an' see how sleek an' butiful it was? an' did ye notice when his temper was up how he would try to get a chance at his keeper to tear him? Well, sir, that's the kind of gintleman Mr. Vere Saye is, an' he's been used to the company of tigers, an' I feel in duty bounded to tell you all I know uv him if ye knock me down the next minute. I know I'll have to run away an' hide meself in the four corners ov the wurreld, but I'll tell yer what I know for the sake ov that swate young lady who is goin' to destruction if she looks on him with favor."

"Speak out, Patrick," said May, "and tell me at once what all this means ; for if you are endeavoring to hurt the gentleman's reputation, it will fare badly with you. You might as well throw yourself off the cliffs into the Hudson."

"An' well I know that, sir," answered Patrick, "an' all I ask at you is that you'll not betray me, but protect me ef yer convinced I am right."

"That I will," said May; "but tell me at once what you have to say about this gentleman, and if it is slander, remember that I will see the extreme penalty of the law dealt out to you."

"Av coorse, sir, av coorse; but, in the first place, Mr. Vere Saye isn't a gintleman at all—he's an escaped convict. I knowed him the day he come down to the stable wid the ponies and phaeton, an' I've done scarce a ha'porth's worth of work since lookin' after him. If ye've a doubt av him, ask him to let you look at his arrum above the elbow, an' ye'll see what'll look as much like a mounse as ef it was a mouse. It might desave a cat."

May had formed no idea what revelation Patrick was about to make, but he never dreamed of anything like this. For a moment he was speechless with astonishment, and, when speech returned to him, he said, "You scoundrel, if you don't prove this to me I'll have you sent to prison for life."

Patrick stood looking at May, but showed no anger. "An' yer right, Misther May," he replied, "an' I'll go straight to the pini-tintary wid yer if I don't prove all I say. An' wasn't I sax months in the dock at Toulon whin he belonged to the chain-gang, an' wasn't his number 32? An' wasn't he transported for murder, an' didn't I see him ivery day, for the rason I was in the same predicament meself? An' I wouldn't tell yer honor that if it wasn't to save the young leddy from shame."

"You a convict?" said May, still more astonished. "And do you expect me to believe a story like this, coming from such a source?"

"Yes, sir, I do; ef I was a convict it was agin my will. I was innocent as the child unborn of any wrongdoing, an' was finally released and sint off wid flyin' colors, God and the saints be praised; but mind ye, Misther May, I saw this would-be gintleman ivery day while I was there, an' he escaped jist before I left, an' the Frinch governmint offered a thousind francs for to catch him. Och! I'll niver forget the foine crater, an' how the Frinch officers used to come out an' see him lift the four-hunder-pound stones an' walk off wid 'em as aisy as you would carry your ridin'-whip."

"What have you to sustain your charge?" said May.

"Let him roll up his shirt-sleeve," replied Patrick, "an' if he hasn't the picter ov a mouse jist above the elbow, thin I'm a liar, that's all."

"Have you seen that mouse since you met Mr. Vere Saye here?"

"No, sir, I haven't, but that makes no difference ; it's there, an he won't dare to show that arrum."

"Nonsense !" said May, "this is some hallucination ; you are as crazy as a March hare, and my advice is that you get into a lunatic-asylum as soon as possible."

"An' is it a lunatic-asylum ye'd be puttin' me into, Misther May, whin I'm only tryin' to save Miss Flossy from a fate that would make yer heart blade ?"

"What am I to do about all this, Patrick ?" said May. "Here you are confessing that you've been a convict, and bringing a charge against an English gentleman that he was a fellow-prisoner in the galleys at Toulon. Who will believe such a statement ? Mr. Vere Saye is evidently a man of means, and would crush you as he would a reptile, and you would receive sympathy from no one. The mere fact that you have been a convict would prevent any one from believing you."

"But, Misther May," said Patrick, "I'll tell ye how it was I was convicted. I druv a carriage for Misther Somers, an English gentleman livin' in Paris, an' one night, at two o'clock in the mornin', I was waitin' for my masther at the door ov a gamblin'-hell, whin a young gentleman comes down the steps ov the house, an', as he started down the strate, I see two min jump out ov an alley and knock him down and were proceedin' to rob him. I left me harses an' ran to help him, an' wid me whip-handle I struck wan ov the devils across the ear, an' hit de odder wid me fist, whin they both tuk to their hales. I stooped to hilp the gentleman up, but he wasn't much stunned, and came to, sazin' me by de trote and cryin' murder, an' in less than no time de perlice had me, an' de young man was a swearin' as it was me as had knocked him, cos he was struck from behint an' niver see the fellers as hit him. The blood was flowin' from a gash on his head, an' blood was on the handle ov my whip, an' devil a bit would they belave me story, so I was locked up in prison. Oirly next mornin' Misther Somers called at the perlice-station an' found me up before the prefect, an' the young man swearing agin me, an' givin' sich evidince dat it was all day wid me. Misther Somers he give me the best carackter in the wurruld, but it was no use ; they handed me over to de commissary of perlice, an' I was sint before de Court of Assizes. Dey found me guilty ov tryin' to rob de young gentleman and sintinced me to the galleys for tree years. There's where I first met Misther Vere Saye, as they calls him, an' maybe he'll know me

now, although I am changed a good deal in eight years ; I was thin only twinty-wan, widout a hair on me face."

"But how did you get away from the hulks ?" asked May.

"Well, sir, sax months after my conviction the two min as knocked the young gintleman down was taken in the act of com-mittin' a burglary, bad luck to 'em ; thin the divils did me a good turn, for they declared I was innocent ov the attempt to rob. The British Minister tuk the matter in hand, an' I was let loose an' sint back to Paris in the diligince, instid ov travelin' on fut wid a cut-throat Frinchman shackled to me ; an' the only good he iver did me, I used to sleep on him at night, because I was so much the stronger. He was a little divil that had robbed an' murdered his grandmother."

Patrick here went into the stable and returned with a box. "Here, Misther May," said he, "are me papers, which will give ye a history ov all these matters, wid a letter from de British Minister an' from Misther Somers certifyin' to my character an' the divil knows what all. Rade me papers, sir, an' see if yer think Patrick O'Donahue a vile convict afther that !"

May carefully examined the documents while O'Donahue attended to his stable duties. "Take heed to ye, Topsy, ye jade," he said, talking to his favorite horse ; "ye'll have to mind yer manners, or I'll sind ye to the hulks, an' ye'll be made to mind yer paces there. An' it's not good oats an' hay ye'll get there, but black bread an' dirty water ; and thin to think ov ye, me ould Topsy, comin' out at that an' thin bein' called a vile convict, whin ye were innocint as a colt, an' niver as much as ran over an ould apple-woman's stand in all yer life. Och ! but it's hard to bear, an' thim Frinchmen, such little frog-atin divils as they are—but avich, ould Topsy, I won't mind it all a bit if I can save Miss Flossy from fallin' into the clutches of No. 32. A foine man that, who has broken stone in the galleys, to stale such a swate crater as that ; may the divil fly away wid him !"

Patrick was interrupted at this point in his conversation with Topsy by May, who said, "I have read your papers, Patrick, and you stand completely acquitted of any offense. You should have been indemnified for your incarceration."

"So I was, sir," said Patrick ; "they gave me sax hunder francs an' paid me for the loss ov me time."

"Tell me, Patrick, who was No. 32 before he went to the galleys ?"

"He was a cilibrated circus-rider and gymnast, sir, in Paris, an' they called him 'Robert the Divil,' an' I'm thinkin' his name fit him. He killed Count Cassaroles, whom I mind well whin I was in Paris."

"How did he make his escape from the hulks?"

"Well, sir," answered Patrick, "it's a long story, an' I'll tell it ye. Well I remember the night it happened. I was in the same boat wid him, thirty ov us in all, an' we were workin' in the rain all that night off Toulon Point. Whin it came our turn to rest, the dirty Frinch guards covered thimsilves up and went to slape in a hoisting-boat alongside us, an' I couldn't slape for the cold. Well I remember seein' two fellers slip over the bow"; and Patrick here related the story of Robert le Diable's escape, which has been already told the reader.

May listened attentively, and, when Patrick finished, he said, "I believe every word you have uttered, although you may have made a mistake in your man. One changes a good deal, you know, in eight years."

"Let me ax ye, Misther May," inquired Patrick, "wad ye know Misther Vere Saye if ye met him eight years from now? Ask him to show ye the mouse on his arrum; sure that's aisy enough to be done; an' if ye look at his ankles ye might find marks of the darbies. No, sir, I know him as well as I should know my brother."

"It is a difficult matter to deal with," said May, "but don't breathe a word of what you have told me to a living soul. Your life depends on it."

"I know that, sir," replied Patrick; "a blow from dat man's fist would be worse than a kick from a harse wid four shoes on one fut. No! no! yer honor, I shall be as quiet as a sittin' hin."

May now left the coachman and proceeded toward the old oak, lost in thought. He heeded not the beauties of nature, the many-hued trees, nor the song of the birds. Several squirrels crossed his path, but he did not notice them, for his mind was absorbed in the dreadful information given to him by Patrick. He thought only of the wretch who had worked his way into society without any one knowing his origin, whose ways were dark and mysterious, as befitted an escaped convict.

"Great Heavens!" he exclaimed, "to think that Flossy should meet with such a fate!" And then he thought to himself how happy he could be with her, now that there was no hope of his ever obtaining the hand of Louise.

May had never much fancied Vere Saye, who professed to be a moralist and held himself aloof from social gatherings. "Now," he said to himself, "I will know the truth about this person. I have no proof except an Irish coachman's word, and he a released convict. I can't ask Vere Saye to show me his arm to see if he has a mark on it. Really, I don't know how to go to work about this matter, but I must save Flossy at all hazards."

Then his thoughts reverted to the time when Flossy would get over her chagrin and disappointment, and, finding out the true character of Vere Saye, would thank May for his thoughtful care, and would finally turn to him as the needle to the pole.

May reached at last the ancient oak, where the hawks were flitting about, uttering plaintive cries over a nest that perhaps an owl had desecrated or a gray squirrel overthrown. While May had been thinking of Vere Saye and the crimes imputed to him, he had worked himself up to a state of excitement. He believed Vere Saye to be capable of anything bad, and thought to himself that, should he meet him, he would give him a piece of his mind, even if the exposure were fatal to himself. "D—n the scoundrel!" he muttered, as he reached the tree; "he ought to be lynched, and I would like to put the rope round his neck."

At that instant he caught a glimpse of a lady's dress on the other side of the tree, and immediately afterward Flossy and Vere Saye appeared, the former blushing and the latter rather vexed at the interruption.

"Good-morning, May," said Vere Saye; "you must have a romantic twinge this morning to come out here alone, and so early."

May could hardly contain himself at this remark, though under ordinary circumstances he would have made some pleasant reply. Now he thought only of the escaped convict who shared the heart of one whom he had lately felt could make his life happy could she share it with him. Taking no notice of Vere Saye, but, pressing Flossy's outstretched hand, he said, "You look fresh as the springtime, when the flowers peep from the ground to welcome its advent. May you never know a sorrow to dim the brightness of your eyes."

Vere Saye looked rather surprised at May's manner, but it never struck him that he meant to be unfriendly. He thought perhaps it was a passing whim, but, after waiting a moment, he said, "May, have you no greeting for me, or is it all for Miss Carrolton?"

May regarded him coldly, saying, "I have no greeting for you

that you would like ; better, then, not force yourself upon my attention. I should say things you would not wish to hear, but which I shall take an opportunity to say to you privately. I would not shock this young lady's ears by repeating in her presence what I have to say."

Vere Saye straightened himself up, though he did not for an instant lose his presence of mind. "Mr. May," he said, "your manner is so remarkable that I might suppose you are amusing yourself at my expense, only that, knowing you to possess the instincts of a gentleman, I can not believe you would be guilty of intentional rudeness. There is some mistake here which must be cleared up at once. I have no concealments from this young lady, and there is nothing I have ever done that I object to her knowing. I would lay bare my heart before her as I would before my God. What does all this mean?"

"I am glad," said May, "that the course you have run has left a little of God's image in your heart—that is, if you have a heart, which I much doubt, or you would not desire to consign this sweet girl to a life of ignominy, which will surely be her lot if she shares it with you."

This conversation passed in a few seconds, while Flossy looked on in amazement, and her generally rosy face became pale as a lily. At last she seemed to wake up to the state of affairs and saw that the fair fame of Vere Saye was threatened by George May. She sprang to her lover's side, and, regarding May indignantly, exclaimed, "How dare you, sir, insinuate anything against Mr. Saye, who is too honorable to do a wrong of any kind? George May, I didn't think you had so much meanness in you, and, unless you recall what you have said, you need never look upon me as your little sister again."

"Let *me* settle this matter with Mr. May, Flossy," said Vere Saye. "It concerns me, and I am sure he is laboring under a mistake which I can soon explain. I know that he will make the *amende honorable* when he finds that he has been needlessly severe. Say what you have to say, Mr. May, in the presence of Miss Carrolton, and let her be the judge between us. If you can show the slightest stain upon my escutcheon, you are at liberty to proclaim it over the earth."

"Cool, deceitful, damnable villain!" muttered May between his teeth, "and he is going to bluff me off with calm effrontery." Turning to Vere Saye, he said, aloud, "You can disprove the

charge I have to bring against you in one minute, and, as I would spare this young lady pain, I trust we shall end the discussion here. We can have an explanation at my rooms, or yours, whichever you may think proper. If I have wronged you in word or deed, I will make ample apology."

"I also," said Vere Saye, "wish to cause this sweet girl as little pain as possible, and, as I am certain I have done nothing to be ashamed of, I insist on your making the charge in her presence, unless she objects to it."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Flossy, putting her arm affectionately through that of Vere Saye, "I have no objection, but would rather know right here what Mr. May can have to say against you. Vere, make him tell you here before me. I know you have done no wrong, and I want you to show Mr. May that neither he, nor any one else, can change my opinion of you."

"But, Miss Flossy," said May, "the revelation I have to make is a terrible one—scarcely fit for your ears. I would save you the pain of hearing it."

"You save me pain!" exclaimed Flossy, her eyes flashing and her lips closing upon her pearly teeth with a look of defiance no one thought she could assume; "you would save me pain as the cat would the mouse. Don't ever talk to me of friendship and disinterestedness again. I never thought you could be so mean. I shall end by hating you."

"Hear him first, Flossy," said Vere Saye, calmly; "he may have heard some calumny against me, and his humiliation will come when he is undeceived."

George May turned upon him, his eyes sparkling with rage. "You humiliate me, sir, by any explanation you could make! You will be glad to make your escape, and hide your head from those you have imposed upon by the time I have done with you. Your cool behavior does not deceive me."

"What do I care," said Vere Saye, "whether you are deceived or not? All I ask is that this dear girl shall believe in me, and I defy you to make any impression upon her mind hurtful to me."

"Yes, I defy you," said Flossy. "I never thought you could be so mean as to try and insinuate anything against my best friend."

"We will see who is your best friend, Miss Flossy, before we get through with that man. If my revelations pain you, you have yourself to blame, since you insist on hearing them."

"And I insist upon it still," said Vere Saye, sternly. "You shall not leave this spot until you make known your charges; and let me advise you to retain the manners of a gentleman, as you do not appear to advantage in another *rôle*."

This remark increased May's anger. "If I thought proper," said he, "I would leave you here without any explanation and denounce you to the police for sailing under false colors, and I would like to see you prevent my doing so."

"Well, really," said Vere Saye, "if it were not for your extreme impertinence this would be amusing. If I served you right I would tie you to a sapling with my pocket-handkerchief until, spoiled child as you are, you recovered your senses."

"Yes," said Flossy, "Louise Morton told me you were nothing but a spoiled boy, and that you were great fun, and wanted to marry her."

May looked first at one and then at the other with the utmost indignation. "You'll tie me to a sapling, will you, Mr. Vere Saye? No doubt you have the strength to do it. A man who could carry four-hundred-pound stones on his head in Toulon dock-yard should be able to tie me if I stood still and allowed him to do so, and did not send a ball through his head." Taking a pistol from his pocket, he cocked it, saying, "You don't suppose I would undertake to unmask a desperado such as you unless I came prepared to defend myself?"

May looked keenly at Vere Saye while he made these remarks. He thought they would crush him to the earth. On the contrary, he was perfectly cool, smiling at Flossy, who clung to his arm.

"The man is clean daft, Flossy," said he; "do not let us continue to excite him," and, turning to May, said, "Do not fear, sir, that I shall so far lay aside the instincts of a gentleman as to use my strength against you, except to protect myself from your assaults. What I have to settle with you will be done elsewhere and at a fitting time. Put up your pistol; it implies a want of courage that I did not suspect you of."

Nothing is so exasperating to a hot-headed man as a person who is perfectly cool, and there is no knowing what May might have done if Vere Saye had not reminded him that he had brought charges against another man in presence of a lady whose opinion he greatly respected, and that it was only proper that he should have an opportunity to exculpate himself.

"Come to the point at once, sir," said Vere Saye, "and let

me show you up as a detractor. I do not understand your innuendoes. Spit out your venom, and let me see what it amounts to. I have always given you credit of being a brave gentleman, but I am sorry to say that I find you a low slanderer!" All this Vere Saye uttered with perfect coolness.

George May was almost frantic with rage, and at one moment was on the point of shooting Vere Saye, when Flossy interposed her figure between the two men. "You will have to shoot through me, Mr. May, before you can reach him. Coward! to dare to draw upon an unarmed man."

"Yes," said May, "I admit it is cowardly," and discharging his pistol in the air, he replaced it in his pocket. "Now, sir, we are on equal terms. You need not fear my pistol, and I insist on your answering my questions."

"If it suits me to do so," answered Vere Saye. "I think I am honoring you far too much; but go on, sir; let us see where your manners will fetch up."

"In the first place, I want to ask you if you were in Paris eight years ago?"

"I was," said Vere Saye, looking surprised at the tenor of the question. "Perhaps you have learned that I was fond of pleasure while I was there. If you are anxious about my morals, I will let you inspect the diary I kept there."

May took no notice of the sneering remark, but continued his questions.

"Did you ever become acquainted with one Robert le Diable, who was in Paris at that time?"

"I knew him only by sight. He was a gymnast of herculean strength, and often performed in presence of the Parisians."

"Was he tried for murder?" inquired May.

"Good God!" exclaimed Vere Saye, looking surprised, "where is all this to end?"

"I thought I would touch a tender chord. Do not answer unless you want to, for I don't suppose these reminiscences are pleasant."

"I will answer anything you please to ask. Go on with your questions, irrelevant as they seem to be. Yes, Robert was tried for murder, and I was present at the trial."

"A curious coincidence! Pray, whom did he murder?"

"He was convicted of murdering the Marquis of Cassarole; but I am convinced that he was innocent of the crime."

"Of course," said May; "no doubt *you* will think so. What was the sentence of this Robert?"

"He was sentenced to the galleys at Toulon for life, and is there now, if living."

"Do you know," said May, "that this Robert le Diable had the figure of a mouse on his right arm, above the elbow, by which he can be easily identified?"

At this remark Vere Saye turned deadly pale and put his hand on his heart; but he soon recovered himself. "O my prophetic soul!" he exclaimed. "I knew it; I felt it; so near and yet so far."

May and Flossy looked at him with surprise, for he seemed to forget that any one was present, but walked up and down as if recalling some early reminiscences. "Great God!" he exclaimed, "inscrutable are thy ways; and am I thus ever to be disappointed?"

"This," said May, "seems to touch you. I hope I have not revived too painful recollections."

For a moment Vere Saye did not answer; then he looked up, with a sad smile on his face. "Reserve your pity, sir, for souls like yours are incapable of feeling what I do at this moment. I am not often unnerved, but a part of your revelation has affected me. Now go on with your questions."

"Do you not know what became of this Robert le Diable?"

"I do not."

"Then," said May, "I will tell you. After serving about two years he escaped from the galleys, and ever since has been leading the life of an adventurer, flying all the time from the reward of five thousand francs offered for his capture by the French government. He lately appeared in New York, and fraudulently obtained letters of introduction to some of the best people, on the strength of which he presented himself at Morton villa under the assumed name of Vere Saye."

At this moment Flossy, with terror-stricken face and starting eyes, rushed forward to George May, and, seizing him by the arm, cried, piteously, "Do you wish to break my heart? It's a lie, and you know it." Then turning to Vere Saye and placing her hand on his breast, she cried, "Tell this man he lies; crush him sooner than let him utter such words against you."

Vere Saye stood cool and tranquil under this attack. He smiled ironically, and answered, "Flossy, this man is a liar of the mean-

est stamp. He has woven together some facts in a way to suit his designs, and, if I served him right, I would crush the life out of him where he stands, in all his insolence and malice. But I have pledged myself not to use force against him, and for the present he must escape punishment."

"When you appealed to my chivalry," said May, "and induced me to fire my pistol in the air, giving you all the benefit of your great strength, you should be careful not to use such taunts. You invited me to cross-question you, under the promise that you would attempt no outrage, and now, like all big cowards, when I have stated the truth about you, you go to whining like a whipped cur."

"If you have anything more to say, go on," said Vere Saye; "you are safe from me. It will give me no trouble to prove you a liar."

"You can prove it in an instant," said May, "by taking off your coat and baring your right arm, so that I can see whether you have the figure of a mouse above the elbow. If you have no such mark, I have been imposed upon, and will make you every reparation in my power. I am sure, however, that you can not stand the test."

The color came into Vere Saye's face, but as instantly vanished. "What if I decline to gratify you? I have submitted to enough of your impertinence already to try the patience of a less irascible man."

"Then," said May, "I shall bring you face to face with one of your fellow-convicts, who served with you six months in the chain-gang at Toulon, and he will identify you. I shall proclaim to the world who and what you are; and perhaps the authorities of New York will find in you the head and front of the midnight marauders that have lately been robbing banks and killing peaceful citizens, or else the leader of those river pirates that have been robbing houses and stealing valuables all along the Hudson. Will you show your arm now?"

"No," said Vere Saye, "but I'll tell you what I will do. I'll give you a thousand dollars if you'll bring me face to face with the man who served with Robert le Diable in the chain-gang. I could obtain important information I have long sought for, but as to submitting any longer to this farce, I will not. I am not going to strip myself for every fool that seems desirous to proclaim me a rogue, and if you are wise you will take your departure."

"Well, Miss Flossy," said May, "although your hero won't

bare his arm to satisfy us that he is not an escaped convict, he has stripped himself of every shadow of a claim to our clemency. I believe him to be the escaped convict Robert le Diable, and you can not help thinking the same. I do not think he is a proper person for you to be in company with, and, if you don't prevent me, I will give you my protection as far as your house, where I go to proclaim Vere Saye an escaped convict. Although he does not stand convicted of any crime against our laws, and he can not be claimed while in this country by the French authorities, as we have no extradition treaty with that country, yet I have no doubt but the chief of police in New York will soon have him locked up for good cause. At all events, he will go about now with the brand of Cain upon him, and will never be allowed to darken the door of an honest house again. Come, Miss Flossy, and trust to my protection. A convict is not fit company for you."

"Sir," said Vere Saye, stepping toward May, "go, before I forget myself. Miss Carrolton does not need your protection, and she will learn what a vile detractor you are before I have done with you. Go, sir, at once, or I will not be answerable for consequences."

"Yes," said May, "I will go, for I don't want to have it said that my brains were beaten out by an escaped convict. Oh! ye gods and little fishes, to think I should have discovered in the person of the Apollo Belvedere, *alias* Vere Saye, a celebrated escaped convict, called Robert le Diable! I go to proclaim the news," and he went off, singing,

"The sheriff's rope went round his neck,
And left him hanging for crows to peck."

All this time Flossy sat on a bench under the oak, sobbing as if her heart would break. Even when Vere Saye approached and took her hand, saying, "My darling, this has been a dreadful scene for you," she did not move, nor did she cease her sobbing, but shrank from his touch, much to his surprise.

"Why, Flossy," he said, "what does this mean? You certainly place no faith in what that madman says. Why do you shrink from me?"

Flossy raised her eyes to his, and, almost choking with emotion, she said, "Why did you refuse to show him your arm? it would have settled everything, and no one would ever have heard of this dreadful scene. It was so easy to end the matter, for when Mr. May saw that you had no mark on your arm he would have apolo-

gized for his mistake. Now he will go to Mrs. Eton's and proclaim you that dreadful thing he called you—an escaped convict—and I shall never dare to face them after that." Then she sobbed more violently than before. "Oh! it was cruel in you to let him go away under the belief that you were what he called you. My heart is broken."

Vere Saye was puzzled. Here was a phase in woman's character with which he was totally unacquainted. He had had very little to do with women, and had never before held any such relations with one of the sex as he now did with Flossy. He would have trusted her without limit, and supposed she had implicit faith in him. He did not know how much women are attached to appearances, and how few of them are willing to go in direct opposition to the opinions of the society to which they belong. Vere Saye supposed Flossy would cling to him, no matter what reverse of fortune he might meet with.

"Flossy," he said, with saddened voice, "one would think you attached some importance to this man May's ridiculous statements. I can refute them whenever I please."

"But," said Flossy, still sobbing, and looking appealingly in his eyes, "why place me in such an unpleasant—nay, dreadful—position before my friends? Mr. May is an old friend of theirs, and they will believe every word he says; you could so easily have satisfied him, and saved all this scandal."

"But if I did not care to satisfy him, what then?"

"You can easily satisfy me, then," said Flossy, "by simply showing me your arm, and I can then tell my friends that Mr. May has spoken falsely."

"But suppose, Flossy, that I should refuse to satisfy you on that subject; what then?"

"Then you will break my heart, for I can never face my friends and tell them I am certain you are not an escaped convict. O Vere! do show me your arm. I would show you both of mine any time you asked me."

"Yes, but you have such beautiful arms, you might be proud to show them."

"Pop often shows me his arms, he is so proud of his muscle."

"I dare say," returned her lover, "but I am not so proud of my arm as to be anxious to show it, even to you. Certainly, darling, you do not for a moment put faith in this wild story, invented by Prince Gold Hair for some purpose of his own. Most

likely that young fellow is full of vices, and I know that he will not hesitate to lie."

"Oh, how can you say that of him?" exclaimed Flossy. "Mr. May is considered very correct by every one; and I am sure, if you had satisfied him by showing him your arm, he would have been quick to make an apology. O Vere! do not break my heart! Let me go and tell him that you proved to me that you were innocent of his charge."

"Really, Flossy," said Vere Saye, "this is getting to be farcical. Here is a young scapegrace who brings a vile charge against me, and you, to whom I looked to cling to me through all the vicissitudes of life, side with him. He is a vile libeler, and ought to be hunted from society for this flagrant attempt to injure a gentleman of whom he knows nothing. I shall take proper measures to punish him hereafter, though for the present he goes free."

"You would not harm him," said Flossy, "for he has so many friends who would never forgive you. He is considered as good and innocent as a girl."

"That depends on how innocent girls are. I fear they are not all as innocent as my darling Flossy; but as innocent as Prince Gold Hair, they may be. Remember, Flossy, the innocent little humming-bird can fly with a poisoned seed in his bill, which he can drop ten thousand miles from his place of departure, and this seed will spring up a great upas-tree that will poison everything beneath its shadow. Take care, Prince Gold Hair, *alias* George May, that you do not turn out to be a upas-tree of the most poisonous kind! If you love me, Flossy, you can't admire him. If you do admire him, I shall think the wind is blowing your love away and planting the seeds in another garden."

"Oh!" cried Flossy, her tears flowing more copiously than ever, "I could never love any one else; but it must be dreadful to be engaged to one called an escaped convict. All my friends would cast me off, and my heart would break. Even my father would not recognize me; but I am sure I shall die soon, anyway."

"But, Flossy, my darling," said Vere Saye, "I am not going to place you in such a predicament. My intercourse with you has been a beautiful dream, from which I have had a sad awakening. I thought I had tied you to me with bonds of steel, and that your love would outlive all things on earth, but I was mistaken. At the first breath of slander you side with my defamer, and I feel that you would not be averse to a release from an engagement that

you think would link your name with that of a doubtful character. I could not conscientiously keep up that engagement while a doubt rests upon my reputation, and, therefore, I now release you from any promise you have made to me. I have no business to let my heart wander into such sweet domains, for I have stern duties to perform, and, while I am lingering in the lap of love, scoundrels go scot free of their deserved punishment. You are young, full of heart, and will soon learn to love another. Perhaps Prince Gold Hair may console you for my loss."

"You are too cruel," cried Flossy. "How shall I endure life henceforth? Who will ever look upon me again? Even Mrs. Eton will give me up. What shall I do? Oh! prove yourself innocent; let me see your arm, if you will show it to no one else, and my testimony will clear you."

"Flossy," said Vere Saye, "what you have said implies a doubt of me. I could not be happy with any one that had ever doubted me. My nature is stern, but it is true, and you will live to find it out. When it suits me, I will clear up this mystery; but not till then. Come, I will escort you home, if you will accept the escort of one whom Prince Gold Hair has called an escaped convict."

Flossy could not speak for sobbing; but she arose quietly and took the proffered arm. They walked slowly on together, Flossy clinging convulsively to her lover, as a drowning person would to a spar.

"Don't tremble so, Flossy," said Vere Saye; "all will yet be well, if you are true to yourself. We have both been indulging in dreams that may not be realized, but I shall always love you, come what will, and think of the days spent with you as the only happy ones in my checkered career. You will never regret me as I shall regret you. You have let such sunshine into my heart—a heart not heretofore much given to love, but rather occupied with stern duties, which I must now pursue. You are young and plastic, and another's love will soon take the place of that you have for me. I have only touched your imagination—your heart, never!"

"Oh, do not say that!" cried Flossy, almost choking. "I have loved you with all my heart and soul."

"Yet you are almost willing to believe that I am an escaped convict," said Vere Saye. "That is not love, Flossy, for love will believe nothing against a beloved object. It will meet death and dishonor to shield those dear to it. You will love again, and I will go through life the lonely wanderer I have always been; but, Flos-

sy, you must never believe any evil of me. Circumstances prevent my making an explanation at this time, for it might defeat the object at which I am aiming. I have been much disappointed at your hesitancy in believing what I told you, and for that reason, and as long as I remain under the suspicion of being Robert le Diable, I free you from your engagement to me."

They had now reached the garden-gate back of Mrs. Eton's cottage. "Flossy," said Vere Saye, "you had better go in this way, up the back stairs, so that no one will see you. Your eyes are tell-tales, and will expose you. Now good-by for a time. If I live I will return to you, if you are true to me, with a character without reproach."

Flossy snatched his hand and covered it with kisses, but, poor child! she could not speak, nor tell what she felt. She staggered toward the house, and, turning to take a last look at Vere Saye, she went to her room, flung herself upon the bed, and sobbed herself to sleep.

Vere Saye watched Flossy as she went away from him, perhaps for ever, and, heaving a deep sigh, turned toward his inn, determined to leave at once.

He visited Morton villa, where he took charge of *Bene Trovato*, whom he was to place at an asylum for the deaf and dumb, and who had a painful parting from his protector Patch, and then took the morning boat for New York.

George May, for reasons known only to himself, did not divulge the secret intrusted to him by the Irish coachman. Before leaving for New York he had a long talk with Deville, but whether he confided to that gentleman the strange information in relation to Vere Saye is not known; but, as he had no secrets from Deville, it is likely that he told him everything. That evening he took his departure in the steamboat for the city.

After Vere Saye had placed his young *protégé* in the asylum, he started in the apparently hopeless search for his relatives, but could find no clew to them in any quarter. They had disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed them.

Vere Saye employed the best detectives, but they could ascertain nothing. Advertisements in the papers had no effect, for Mr. Morton took care that no newspapers should reach Agnes and her daughter's place of retreat.

One day as Vere Saye was strolling along South Street he noticed the sign "Clapham & Brothers." It was an old East India

house, and he had heard the name mentioned in connection with the bark *Nimrod*. He entered the counting-room, and made inquiry when that vessel sailed for China, and, after searching a great many books, it was found that the vessel had sailed from New York January 20, 18—.

Vere Saye saw in the list of passengers the names of his uncle, wife, and child, and he deemed it conclusive evidence that they had all perished in the *Nimrod*.

Charles Gale had deposited his money with banker Morton, and had taken bills of exchange with him.

Vere Saye, pursuing his researches, ascertained that Morton did not establish himself in business in New York until December, 18—, and that circumstance put him again at fault. How could Charles Gale obtain bills of exchange from him?

Vere Saye could find no one (strange to say) who could inform him from what part of the country Mr. Morton came; but remembering the threatening letter his mother had received with an Albany post-mark, he proceeded to that place.

He found that a land agent named Charles Morton had established himself in Albany on the 23d of January, 18—, three days after the sailing of the *Nimrod*, and that this individual was identical with the New York banker.

How could Charles Gale obtain bills of exchange from Mr. Morton, who was not then a banker?

It seemed very curious. Mr. Morton had evidently never received the money. Why, then, should this enmity exist toward the Gales? Vere Saye could not understand it, and almost wore himself out in trying to solve the mystery.

At length he returned to New York to seek some clew to his mother's retreat. In the progress of his search he came constantly in contact with Carrolton, Flossy's father, who, with the Etons, had returned to town. He had never fancied this man, a huge Englishman, who was always trying to play the gentleman, and never succeeding.

He saw that Carrolton was simply a bully, and, in fact, was known on 'Change as the English bull-dog. He seemed always to be saying, "Knock this chip off my shoulder if you dare," but was so large and powerful that few men were bold enough to contradict him.

Carrolton twice invited Vere Saye to go down town with him to the cotton-market to witness his operations, and on his way Carrolton would walk right over anybody who stood in his path, some-

times throwing people to the ground, while Vere Saye would yield the road to the most insignificant person. Vere Saye learned a good deal on these expeditions—how a man could potter all day over a pile of cotton without buying a single bale. He wondered how Carrolton got all his money, and for various reasons began to doubt if he made it honestly.

One morning Carrolton, with his usual pomposity, asked Vere Saye if he would not like to go down to South Street and witness some large cotton operations, saying that he was going to purchase a large amount of cotton on account of Genet & Briggs, of Liverpool, and that he, Vere Saye, would be much interested in the *modus operandi* of transferring cotton from one hand to another.

Carrolton, as usual, spread himself all over the pavement, and pedestrians were getting out of his way with as much haste as a small craft would get out of the track of a three-decker. Applewomen hauled their stands out of the way, and small venders held their wares high above their heads, as the English bull-dog rushed by. As they walked along, Vere Saye was attracted by some prints in a shop-window, and asked to be excused a moment. He stopped to examine them, while Carrolton walked on. At the same instant Vere Saye heard a loud voice close by exclaim, "Halloo, Brice, where did you blow from?"

Vere Saye saw that it was Carrolton who was thus addressed, and glanced sideways at his companion, who put out his great hand and brushed the fellow aside as if he were a fly. "That's not my name," said Carrolton; "get out of my way, or I'll smash you!" and he passed hurriedly on.

"The same old cuss!" said the man, looking after Carrolton; "but where the devil does he get his swell toggery from, for he was seedy enough in the old country?"

Vere Saye turned and followed the fellow up Broadway, and, after going two squares and assuring himself that Carrolton was out of sight, he touched the stranger on the shoulder.

The man turned around in surprise. "Halloo!" he exclaimed, "there's a breed of big dogs out to-day."

"Do you know the man whom you addressed as Brice?" asked Vere Saye.

"Does a chicken know a hawk when he sees him?" said the man. "Does a bonito know a shark? Yes, I know Brice. What do you want with him?"

"Nothing; only I had my doubts, and if you can give me

any information concerning him, it will be worth your while to do so."

"Well," said the man, "you may have your doubts about him, but I haven't. That man is Phil Brice, the forger, who had to run away from England for forging a check on the Liverpool Bank. He's as big a rascal as there is in England—hand-in-glove with all the boxers, prize-fighters, and gamblers, defaulter to several houses that trusted him, and embezzler of his niece's fortune of fifty thousand pounds, which she'll never see a penny of."

"His niece!" exclaimed Vere Saye; "you mean his daughter."

"No, I don't," said the man; "he never had any daughter, but he adopted his niece and all her property long before he left England. There are three or four banks in England that would give five thousand pounds to get hold of him."

"Thank you, sir, for your information," said Vere Saye. "Call at this address," handing him a card, "and you will find it worth the trouble. What is your name?"

"Jim Gardner is my name," replied the man; "just come over from Liverpool, and only four shillings left. But I think I have fallen on my feet as usual, and you will see me soon."

"Well," said Vere Saye to himself as the worthy Mr. Gardner disappeared, "a nice father-in-law I was near getting! The scoundrel, to cheat poor little Flossy out of her money, and then pass her off as his daughter! I thought a dove could never have been hatched in a buzzard's nest. Thank God! there will be no trouble in getting rid of the fellow."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

WEDDING-BELLS.

ALLAN DARE, although frequently absent from the city, had not been idle these many weeks. He had been busy reorganizing the police department, and had almost succeeded in making it a model. Burglary was almost unknown, or was carried on on such a small scale as to attract little notice, and the streets at night were secure for life and property.

The capture of the schooner and the band of pirates was con-

ducted so quietly that a full account of the affair never reached the newspapers. The capture and concealment of Jacob Moses completely disconcerted the robbers, as they had no one whom they could trust to take his place.

The grand jury was soon to meet, and doubtless all the pirates would be indicted, and speedily provided with permanent quarters in the penitentiary.

On the 30th of October a vessel arrived from Turk's Island bringing twenty persons, six of whom were passengers. The latter reported that on the 25th of August they were in the bark Ceylon, bound from Calcutta to New York, with a cargo of India goods and sixty thousand dollars in specie; that on the night of the 25th, about twelve o'clock, when one hundred and twenty miles east of Sandy Hook, they were hailed by a large schooner and ordered to heave to. As there was very little wind at the time, there was no chance to escape, and the order was complied with.

The persons on board the other vessel represented her as the United States revenue-cutter Jefferson, with orders to detain the Ceylon. The schooner was about two hundred and fifty tons burden, with foretop-sail, long head-booms, high bulwarks, six port-holes on each side, and a long tom amidships.

The report went on to say that the Ceylon took in all sail except her three top-sails, jib, and spanker, and lay with the main top-sail to the mast. The schooner sent a boat with twelve men to the Ceylon, in charge of an officer in uniform, who ordered the passengers and crew to be put in irons, blindfolded, and taken to the schooner, where they were stowed below in a dark hole, not seeing daylight again for eleven days.

The schooner's crew then proceeded to rifle the bark and transfer her cargo to their own vessel, employing the boats of the schooner and bark, completing the task by daylight next morning.

The order to scuttle the bark was plainly heard by the prisoners, and in half an hour the gurgling sound made by the sinking vessel was distinguished, and at the same instant the schooner's crew gave three cheers. Then the order was given, "Draw head-sheets, set foressail and top-sail!"

For eleven days the prisoners were kept in darkness in the hold, with bad food and water, and only a blanket apiece to sleep on.

On the eleventh day some men went into the hold, put the prisoners in irons, blindfolded them, and carried them on deck, where they were transferred to a boat and put on shore. Here

they were made to sit down in a row and remain without speaking for three hours, on pain of being shot.

After remaining quiet for a long time, one of the crew ventured to remove his bandage, and found it was night. As a stiff breeze was blowing, the schooner was by that time many miles away.

The crew and passengers had no idea where they were. The pirates had left them two kegs of fresh water and a small quantity of bread, so that, after taking their supper, they lay down to wait for daylight.

When day broke they found themselves on the island of Maraguana, north of Cuba, and, finding a settlement during the day, made themselves tolerably comfortable. After remaining there twenty-four days, they took passage home in a schooner from Turk's Island, which had touched at Maraguana.

"What do you think of this?" demanded the old chief of police, walking into Allan Dare's apartment with the foregoing statement in his hand.

"I think," said Allan, "that it is none of our business. The hawks have evidently gone to sea, and it's the navy's business to look after them. Being so close to New York when the piracy was committed, I think the schooner sailed from here, and is the other schooner referred to by the pirates in their several conversations overheard by my men."

"No," said the chief, "this is a different kind of schooner; she had high bulwarks, a square foretop-sail, six port-holes on a side, and carried a long tom."

"She had no bulwarks," replied Allan; "only canvas ones, bogus port-holes, bogus foretop-sail, no guns, and but twenty-two men, all told."

"You must be crazy," said the chief; "how can you guess what she was like? She was fitted as I say. You can't be always right, Dare."

"Pretty nearly always, sir," replied Allan, "for I never guess. I always know for certain. The vessel may have had guns in her hold, but none were mounted when she left New York. Do you know that Tormenteur followed that vessel down to Sandy Hook in his little boat, and, when all was quiet, anchored ahead of her, dropped down, and got on board by the bob-stays? It was a dark, rainy night, and the watch on deck was making himself comfortable under the lee of the cuddy. Tormenteur was on board long enough to examine the vessel carefully. At four in the morning

the schooner got under way and beat out to sea, and at eight o'clock was hull-down in the offing, steering south by east."

"You beat the devil!" said the chief; "but why didn't you wind up the thing handsomely, and make *Tormenteur* capture the schooner and bring her into port? No doubt he could have done it."

"Because I wanted to leave something for the navy to do."

"But, man, here you have let a pirate sail without saying anything about it. This will seriously compromise you."

"It doesn't trouble me, sir," said Allan; "I wrote at once to the Secretary of the Navy, and he wrote back that he hadn't a vessel to spare; that he was going off on a picnic in the schooner *Grampus*, and was about to send the *Shark* to Hayti, to carry the new minister; that the *Curlew* couldn't leave Baltimore until the elections were over; that the *Firefly* had a rotten bowsprit, the *Jackal's* captain had been drunk for a week, and that all the rest of the home squadron were unseaworthy. What would you, sir? as the French have it. The secretary requested me to keep the whole matter a profound secret, and in three months he would try and get the three-decker *Pennsylvania* to sea; that is, if Congress would appropriate the necessary funds for that purpose."

"Then there's nothing to be done, is there?" said the chief.

"No, not until the vessel comes to land her cargo, and then I'll tell you more about it."

"Good-by, Dare," said the chief; "you are one too many for me; every time I come here to tell you the news I get my fingers burned. Good-by! good-by!"

Day after day Allan Dare was closeted with Belette and *Tormenteur*. Something unusual was being discussed; what it was, time will show.

The fashionable people of New York were about this time surprised at the announcement of the engagement of Mr. James Deville, the banker, to Miss Louise Morton. Of course the gossips were out in full force, and the announcement afforded conversation for a week at least.

As Mr. Deville was going to Europe, the preparations were hurried, and the tenth of January was set for the wedding.

The temper of Louise was capricious. The man whom she loved with all her soul was in his grave, and she scarcely loved Deville enough to be willing to devote her entire time to him. She wanted excitement, and admirers bowing before her that she might treat

them as children treat flies—tear their wings off and let them go. She craved a love such as she had lost. Deville's affection seemed insipid to her after Conrad's. Only several lovers at a time would have satisfied her, for, in the language of Byron,

“In her first passion woman loves her lover,
In all the others all she loves is love,
Which gets to be a fashion she can ne'er get over.”

She, who had drunk the maddening draughts of passion, which filled her soul with ecstasy and illuminated her heart with the glorious sunshine that finds entrance there but once in a life-time, could never be satisfied with drinking the trickling waters from a simple fountain, pure though they might be. Her happiness had been mingled with the bitter drops of woe, but she would not exchange one of those drops for the most delicious nectar that ever sparkled in an Eastern despot's crystal cup.

These drops of woe, bitter as they were, were balm to her impoverished heart. She loved the thorns that pierced her velvet skin, when she thought who had driven them home. She loved the man that had opened the deep fountains of her heart and first taught her what love was, though he trampled upon her, and treated her prayers with scorn. This love she kept enshrined in her heart, and it was the only virtue she possessed; yet hers was a love that would soon become satiated. If Conrad had lived and married her, the passion which she felt would have burned out in time, and nothing but the ashes of love have remained.

Hers was not the pure affection that lasts for ever, through prosperity and through adversity. She had not a single *scintilla* of that divine feeling which makes two souls a unit. She was avaricious as a miser of the love she craved, and reckless as a spendthrift of it when once in her possession.

The love Louise had for Conrad was like the mad rush of waters down a steep precipice, carrying everything before it. Her love for Deville was like the eddying waters after they have passed over the dam. For the first her love was like one drinking the maddening draught of Hippocrene—for the other like drinking the draught without its maddening power.

And Deville, poor fool! persuaded himself to believe that he was loved with all the passion of her nature. She made him think she had never loved another. He had found how false are the illusions of love, yet he would suffer martyrdom, and go through all the

blackness of night, in pursuit of the dominant passion of his soul. He dreamed that he had a glimpse of heaven in a love more sublime than any that had ever before found its way to earth. He believed that it would endure to eternity, and never be lost in the rushing waters of time.

O fool ! after all your sufferings and humiliation to believe in a woman with cold, steel eyes, who will trample on your heart as she did that of Edgar Lane, and who will plant a dagger in your bosom when you can no longer cater to her appetite, or pour gold into her lap from your overflowing cornucopia !

It was a week before the wedding was to take place. Deville was sitting in the parlor of the Morton mansion, while Louise reclined on a footstool at his feet. She had allowed him to imprison one of her beautiful hands in his, a favor she sometimes granted, for she said, "You know, James, a maiden can not be too coy ; and evil minds misconstrue the most innocent acts. Slandrous tongues are always ready to whisper scandal to the willing winds, which soon convey it to the ends of earth."

"But, Louise," said Deville, "what little love you've given me since first we were engaged ! You deal it out to me as misers deal out their gold. You think it such a boon to give me your hand to hold, while only once or twice you've offered me those sweet lips."

"They'll sweeter be by and by for not having been too much kissed," answered Louise. "Handling the tinted peach rubs off the sparkling bloom. Be patient, James ; when I am yours you'll find me no longer coy ; but now asking too many favors vexes me. I am not always of a patient mood. It looks as if you had not that wise regard for my reserve I have a right to expect from one of your staid character. If you should find me too easily won, you might have occasion hereafter to doubt my constancy. There ! you may kiss my hand ; there's something dainty in so sweet a pastime. No pure maiden should ever allow any but her own true love so great a favor as this." In this manner Louise beguiled Deville, making him think that all the universe did not contain so pure a gem as she.

"When we are married," she said, "you will take me to Paris, will you not ?"

"I will take you wherever you wish to go," he replied, "for where you are there will be my paradise."

"I want to fly away," said Louise, "from this stale life, where people plod through the dull streets with greedy faces, looking for

gold in every hole and cranny where it may perchance be found. Take me where I can live and breathe and forget the memories of the past. I want to wipe out from my mind all that has occurred in this dull country, and in some foreign land, where I can live among the wondrous arts of olden days, fill my mind with ancient lore and fit myself for the high position you have promised I shall hold.

"I want to sit in the palaces of kings, and see the thrones from which have issued edicts that have ruled the world. Let me view the old castles of renown, whose every turret is tinted by the memories of great deeds, and whose court-yards once rang with the laughter and revel of those whose souls were all attuned to love, whose love was the chief business of their lives, and where every harpist sang of love alone. I am tired of this stiff, rude republicanism on which our fathers so prided themselves, as if 'twas sin to try and excel in works of art above the brutish clowns that peddle penny whistles in the street.

"I long to sit under the grand arches of ancient cathedrals and hear the organ-peals reverberate through the long-drawn aisles, waking the echoes, and see the wondrous sculptures standing out on every hand. The sight of these things will carry me back to those rude times when life was not confined by rules, as it is here, and when it was no sin to live in love according to nature. Then I'll show you what love is. But I must first forget the past, and be born again in that old country where golden fountains pour out their libations, glistening like silver in the noonday sun, and marble gods and goddesses disport themselves in the pure waters in basins sculptured in the highest art.

"Let me roam through ancient cities, where everything seems grand and immortal, whose structures have stood the test of time, and not a pile of rude bricks, as we have here, ready to tumble down at the slightest shock. Let me revel in the works of the great masters, who have deftly portrayed the passions of the soul and pictured love as my senses tell me it should exist. Then my heart will learn to love again, when it has something new to feed upon, and you can cull the honey from the flower.

"I long to stand on the mountain-heights where the chamois has stood, springing swifter than hunter's bullet. I'd dare the snow and glaciers on the highest Alpine summit, and with my alpenstock follow the boldest guide. I'd love to skim across those lovely lakes which lie like diamonds in the bosom of the mountains,

where high-capped peaks reflect their rugged forms on their smooth surfaces, as if on plates of burnished steel.

"Give me the land of music and of flowers, the land where poetry and song never die, where love reigns eternal, and children learn that they have a heart when twelve years old. That's the land for me; no gloomy thoughts would reach me beneath those sunny skies. My heart would be attuned to love and happiness, and I'd rest, when fatigued with pleasure, under the shadow of the golden clouds which sail all day like freighted ships across the sun, to cool the earth and make a shade for lovers. I feel sure, if I could have all this, it would drive out the humors of the last dull year, and make me soon forget the mortification to which I have been subjected for doing what I thought right."

Deville kissed her hand, and Louise did not withdraw it, although it seemed to burn her like a coal of fire. It set her to thinking of the falsehoods she had told, and how she was holding out hopes of love to one whom she felt she could never really love at all; and yet she was ready to swear on holy writ she never had loved a single soul but him.

"Yes," said Deville, in answer to her questions, "you shall have all that you long for, and much more! I will travel with you through lands where all shall be a bright dream—a fairy-land indeed—and if I can not have fairies to attend you, houris beautiful as those in Paradise shall come at your call, and I will always be your faithful lover. Give me but a moiety of that love you claim is yours to give, and you will find me happy as a summer's day. If ever you tire of my love, I'll be patient until you change your mood. I shall always be your slave."

"My God!" thought Louise, "he loves me as I loved Conrad; yet if I trampled on him as Conrad trampled on me, he would do me no harm. He loves more than I did—no, my hate was full of love. I loved Conrad madly when I doomed him to death. Deville is a noble man—far nobler than I deserve—but yet I can not love him. He will simply be the ladder for me to climb to the height I want to reach, and then—well, then I'll soar into the air, and, having stretched my pinions, fly wherever I please, though, like Icarus, I may get a fall."

These were her thoughts, and yet Deville sat by her side in the full security of her love, waiting patiently the promised time when she could respond fully to his passion.

"Deville, *mon cher ami*," said Louise, suddenly, in another

vein, "let me ask you a question. I know very little of business, and want to learn something. Has my father spoken to you in regard to the jointure he is to give me on my marriage, or is he going to turn me over to you with only the stereotyped *trousseau*, and make me no allowance? That wouldn't sound well if told about the rich banker."

"My love," answered Deville, "what do I want with any allowance from your father? I have more than enough for both of us, and you shall be dowered as was never any princess in Europe. Thank Heaven! I have made enough to place me beyond all earthly cares, and when my present fund is exhausted, if ever that should happen, I have an inexhaustible mine of wealth to draw upon."

"That will do," she said; "let us talk no more of filthy lucre. I only wished to know if I should ever be dependent on my father. I am satisfied with a competence, if shared with you. And now, as fashion requires, I shall not see you for the coming week. I will say good-by until you come to claim me for your own. And here's a kiss to cheer you in your loneliness."

She held her mouth up, but Deville took her in his strong arms, from which there was no escape, and imprinted a dozen kisses on her lips. Then he placed upon her wedding-finger a magnificent diamond ring and took his departure, happy in the thought that Louise would soon be his.

When Deville had closed the door, Louise clapped her hands in glee. "He has millions," she said. "That means forgetfulness of all I have ever done wrong; it means attention from my acquaintances, forgiveness from my enemies, obeisance from all the snobs, adulation from all the men, envy from all the women, bowing and scraping from all the trades-people, unlimited credit, the handsomest diamonds in the city, the richest dresses from Paris, the prettiest gloves and bonnets, first place at all the dinners and *petit soupers*, the handsomest carriage and horses, the nattiest liveries, the grandest house, and such acquaintances as I choose to select. What more would I have?

"I have buried my love so deep that I can never resurrect it. I shall apparently be so true to my husband that no one will suspect me of infidelity. I will spend his money like water, for he has a mine to draw upon, he says, that never fails. In the utmost extent of my ambition I never dreamed of a future such as this. May nothing ever occur to mar it. I have wiped out every trace of my connection with Edgar Lane. Not a sign of that affair can ever

be found, and I shall be so rich that I can afford to pension the two witnesses in Ireland, so that they will have no desire to return to America."

So saying, Louise went up-stairs to attend to her wedding outfit.

Great preparations for the marriage were making at the Morton mansion. Mr. Morton had abandoned his cherished hope of marrying Louise to one of the aristocracy; in fact, he was now only too glad to have her marry Deville, one of the rising men of New York. He opened wide his purse-strings, and determined that the wedding should be the event of the season. There were to be eight bridesmaids, including Angeline, the rest chosen from the most aristocratic families in the city. Although all had abused Louise without stint, no one declined to act as bridesmaid, and everybody sought invitations to the wedding, which was to take place at noon in old Trinity Church. After the ceremony a grand reception was to be held at Mr. Morton's residence.

At length the day arrived, and a concourse of people filled the church to its utmost capacity. Thousands of people assembled outside to see the "nobs go in," and it required all the limited police force of the city to preserve order and open a way through the throng.

The carriages drove up to the church, and Mr. Morton assisted his daughter to alight. The crowd was stilled at the sight of so much beauty, for never in all their lives had the people of New York witnessed a spectacle equal to this. Louise's dress was a miracle of richness and taste—white satin covered with the costliest lace and orange-flowers, and a magnificent veil that cost a fortune. So imperial was her beauty that Louise looked as if she might be empress of the world. She looked scornfully upon the crowd, but the people liked her none the less for that. The crowd will bow their necks to Juggernaut whenever it comes along.

"Heavens!" exclaimed one, "isn't she beautiful? I've never seen the likes!"

"Yes," said another, "she's too beautiful, but it is the beauty of the panther in the menagerie."

The bridesmaids and groomsmen followed into the church and up to the altar, where Deville stood ready to receive his bride from her father.

The bishop, assisted by several clergymen, performed the ceremony, and nothing was wanting to make the occasion impressive. The bride and groom turned to leave the church, and the whole

assembly rose to gaze upon them. A handsomer couple was never seen in old Trinity. Louise, with head erect, looked straight before her as if gazing on something in the far distance ; but she saw no one. She was thinking of Ware Conrad, and wondering what would have been her feelings had she stood with him before the altar. She thought now that she had been unfaithful to his memory, that she ought to have lived for him and expiated her crime.

"What a chilling bride !" said some, "and the groom so splendid ! She looks as if she married against her wishes."

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE ARREST.

As the procession passed out of the church the crowd rent the air with cheers. The bride was handed into the carriage by the groom, who had just placed his foot upon the step, when Allan Dare put his hand on his shoulder and said, "James Deville, I arrest you, in the name of the law, as accused of high crimes and misdemeanors !"

In a moment the crowd was pushed aside, and a double cordon of twenty stout policemen, at the head of whom were Belette and Tormenteur, formed a compact body between the groom and the wedding-party.

At the touch of Allan Dare's hand Deville turned calmly around and said, "Where is your warrant ? This is a cruel time to execute it. Why did you not do it before the ceremony, and save all the unhappiness that will follow ?"

"Because," answered Allan, "you would have lost your bride."

"Thank you for that," said Deville, "but do me a favor ; let me call my valet, and speak a word to the bride."

"Certainly," said Allan Dare ; "I'll grant you every indulgence, only promise me you'll not escape."

Deville gave a shrill whistle, and a slight Italian-looking youth forced his way through the crowd and bowed to his master.

"Nimble," said Deville, "attend to the business I gave you, and see that I have clothes where I am going." The boy bowed and disappeared.

Deville next leaned in the carriage and said to Louise, "Bear

with me ; it will all be right. You must be ready to join me when I send my ring to you. Bring nothing with you that will attract attention. We will go to other climes, and you shall still be empress in a greater sphere than this."

Louise sat erect in the carriage, pale as marble, but not a muscle moved. She was as cool as Deville, but her cold, hard eyes glittered like those of a serpent. "This is my carnival of glory!" she exclaimed; "this is my road to power and fame! Are all your promises like this? Is the bauble on my finger also glass? Are you a sham all over? Where are now your boasted mines of wealth? I looked to you to hide my crimes under the blaze of your virtues, but I find you a lower criminal than I. Go to jail; I despise you!"

"My mines are secured to you," said Deville, coolly, whose eyes were now opened to her wickedness.

"Then," said she, "I will follow you when you bid me, for I must hide somewhere. I'll despise you more now than I would have done, though we are akin in crime. I once thought you far too pure for me, but you have beaten me in the race to the felon's cell."

All this time Allan stood immovable, not wishing to hear what took place between husband and wife. The crowd was hushed and awe-struck, and the wedding-party were huddled together with pale and anxious looks, wondering what it all meant. Mr. and Mrs. Morton stood in the church-door, elevated above the street, and saw all that occurred, without the power of moving forward on account of the crowd.

Everybody could see that it was an arrest on serious charges, else why such an array of policemen?

Mr. Morton trembled in every limb, for he thought his own turn might soon come. Mrs. Morton looked like a corpse, and despair was pictured in every lineament of her face.

"O husband!" she cried, "give up all, and let Heaven withdraw its vengeance from our house."

"I will do it," he answered, in quivering tones, "as soon as I find the heirs."

Devil had stood aside, and his wife now beckoned to Allan Dare, who approached the carriage and took off his hat.

"Cease your mock humility," said Louise. "The partridge trembled in the fern; she knew the hawk was nigh. I know you through all your disguise, Vere Saye. How well you deserved my hatred and scorn! I'll match you yet. I'll never lose sight of

you, if I live a hundred years. In the turning of the wheel my time will come.—Driver, go home !”

“Stop,” said Allan ; “I’m far too kind to you,” he whispered, “but let me say that I have proof of your marriage with Edgar Lane, and possess reasons why you should want to get rid of him. Take my advice, and bear your load with patience.—Coachman, you can drive on.”

Louise fairly gasped for breath, and fell back in the carriage, boiling with rage. Had she had a pistol, she would have shot Allan on the spot. “Drive faster, coachman,” she screamed, and the coachman lashed his horses and dashed through the streets to the imminent hazard of pedestrians. When she reached her father’s house she threw open the carriage-door and made a spring to reach the pavement. Her gorgeous veil caught in the door-knob, and was torn from her proud head with all its wealth of orange-blossoms. Heedless of the mischief, she ran bareheaded up the steps, and frantically rang the bell. When the door was opened she rushed up-stairs to her room, and there she threw herself, with all her rich regalia, on the bed. She was too much enraged to sob. She cursed the day she was born, and cursed the day she ever consented to become Deville’s wife. “O Conrad !” she cried, “I should have lived for you, and expiated my crime.”

She tore off all her rich garments and strewed them on the floor. The maid, who soon entered, looked in amazement at the condition of her mistress. “Take those things away,” she cried, imperiously ; “look them up somewhere, and never let me see an orange-blossom again. Get the commonest raiment that I have ; let me wear sackcloth and ashes all the days of my life.” Then she pushed the maid out of the room, and again gave way to her despair.

When the carriage with Louise drove from the church, Allan Dare slipped his arm through Deville’s and said, “Let us walk on ; the crowd is increasing. It is not desirable to have a scene.”

“If I chose,” said Deville, “I could scatter your whole force. I have friends enough in the crowd, and, by the blowing of my whistle, could bring enough to my aid to crush you. You have undertaken a rash scheme, and a treacherous one at that. I thank you, though, for giving me my bride. All may yet be well.”

“Robert le Diable,” said Allan Dare, “I had my duty to perform, and would have performed it had you been my brother. Should you raise a finger to escape I would shoot you on the

spot, and my well-trained men would lodge a dozen bullets in your body."

"Possibly," said Deville, calmly, "and, as I don't want to die just yet, I'll go with you peaceably."

The policemen formed a triple cordon around Allan Dare and the prisoner as they walked along, and clubbed the crowd to make them stand aside. Angry-looking eyes flashed from every side, for Deville was known and loved by all the poor. He had always taken the side of angry mobs and pacified them. His enormous strength was known to all; his splendid physique was the admiration of the rich and poor. He had a thousand friends in every district, but that large, stern man at his side was an army in himself, and cowed them all.

They soon reached a carriage, and *Robert le Diable* entered with Allan Dare. They drove to the city jail, followed by an angry crowd, hallooing and hooting with all their might. The heavy door closed behind the prisoner, and a small field-piece, loaded with grape, was protruded through a hole in the massive gate.

There was nothing for the crowd to wreak their vengeance on except the carriage, which was instantly overturned and broken into a thousand pieces, the frightened horses flying through the street. But all this was of no avail, for *Robert le Diable* was secure in the strongest apartment of the city prison.

The city of New York was thrown into great excitement on hearing of the arrest of James Deville. He was universally loved and respected. When he walked down Broadway in the morning, always dressed in the most refined taste, his clothes fitting his form as if he had been molded into them, he was bowed to by all. His equal was unknown. There were others that excelled him in height or in size, but no one equaled his perfection of form or beauty of face. He had a smile for every one he met, and, being always ready to oblige applicants, would be stopped in the street twenty times on his way to his office by persons wishing to obtain favors.

His popularity with the lower classes gave him the opportunity of recruiting from among them without suspicion. It was supposed that he was a philanthropist by nature, and that it afforded him real pleasure to mix up in the affairs of the lower orders. In settling a street row, Deville was worth a dozen policemen, and in quelling a mob he would jump in when he saw a fight going on, and, holding the combatants apart as if they were children, he would say to one, "Come, Jemmy, this doesn't look well, my boy!"—

"Heigh, John, hold your hand, or you'll be hitting your best friend." Or, if the mob was very turbulent, he would speak kindly to them and argue with them, telling them that he would see their wrongs redressed ; then he would take them off adroitly to the beer-shops and drink with them, and finally send them all home in a good humor.

Sometimes Deville would encounter some troublesome fellow who did not desire to see peace maintained, but wanted an opportunity to violate the law by breaking things generally ; or some leader of the mob, jealous of his supremacy with the people, would want to contest his popularity. Such cases he would deal with in a summary manner.

On one occasion there was a disturbance among the stevedores in South Street. A man called Bully Ruffin had led one set of men against another set, to try and force them to stop work. They were on a strike for higher wages, and wanted to carry the ward with them. Bully Ruffin was a burly fellow weighing two hundred and twenty pounds, with arms like a blacksmith, and a bull-dog countenance that showed his pugnacious disposition. This worthy had his men drawn up in line across the dock and swore that no stevedores should go down there to work unless they went over his body. He had already knocked down two or three men that attempted to pass, and, having a very strong party to back him, he bade defiance to the police.

A large crowd had gathered, and there was every prospect of a bloody fight. Deville happened to be in a merchant's counting-room near by the scene of action, and the merchant said :

"Deville, I want to get my ship off to-day, but can't do it unless this misunderstanding is reconciled. Do me the favor to try your eloquence on those men. All the stevedores would go to work if it was not for Bully Ruffin, who keeps them back, and if you can get him to consent, the rest will follow like a flock of sheep."

Deville promised to try what he could do, and went out and spoke to the men. He represented that Mr. Somers wanted to get his ship to sea that afternoon, and that it would be a great disappointment if he did not succeed, and he asked Bully Ruffin to help him pacify the men.

"Me help to pacify 'em ?" said Bully Ruffin ; "not me, sir, and I don't see, Mr. Deville, what you have to do with this, unless you are willing to make up the difference in our wages."

"Well," replied Deville, "I would even be willing to do that

rather than see men who ought to be living in brotherhood knocking each other to pieces."

"I for one would be willing to go to work, if only to oblige you, Mr. Deville," said one of the men. "And I too," said another; "And I," "And I," said others.

"Shut up!" roared Ruffin. "I'll smash the jaw of the first man that puts a finger to work without my permission."

"Ruffin," said Deville, "you well deserve your name; you are nothing but a bully, and if these men would take my advice they would duck you, for you are depriving their families of food."

"Perhaps," said Bully Ruffin, "you'd like to try that yourself; you'd find it a troublesome job. You bloated aristocrats haven't the muscle for such performances. You're made up of champagne and patty fo grass."

"Bully," replied Deville, "I'm going to teach you a lesson. You can't stop people that want to work from working in this country," and he walked up to Ruffin as calmly as if he was going to shake his hand.

The bully threw his cap on the ground and rolled up his sleeves, putting himself on the defensive. "I'll show you some fun now, boys," he cried; and with that he tried to knock Deville's hat over his eyes. Deville caught Ruffin's wrist with his left hand, and, before the bully could think, he was lying on his back, feeling as if every bone in his body was broken.

Deville put his foot on the prostrate bully to keep him down, and said, quietly, "Boys, one of you bring me a rope." The rope was brought, and Deville tied the fellow's hands, who was so badly hurt that he could make no resistance. Deville then picked him up, threw him over his shoulder, and walked toward the river.

"For God's sake, Mr. Deville," cried the man, "what are you going to do with me?"

"Merely duck you," replied Deville.

"I submit, sir," said the man, "and will go to work."

"That's all I want," said Deville as he let the ruffian down and untied him. "Now, my good fellow," he said, "let me give you a piece of advice. Remember that a man can be a gentleman and have plenty of muscle besides. Boys," he said, advancing to the crowd of stevedores, "Ruffin wants to go to work; now do me the favor to get Mr. Somers's ship off to-night. Here are twenty dollars to get something to drink, and here," turning to Ruffin,

"are two days' wages, until you get over your accident." Is it a wonder that such a man could rule a mob ?

Of course, Deville's arrest created great excitement everywhere. If a bolt of lightning had fallen into the Exchange it could not have created greater consternation. No one knew on what charge he was arrested, and the fact that he had been dragged, as it were, from the altar, made matters look still more serious.

The newspapers could only state that the arrest had taken place just after the marriage-ceremony, animadverting in severe terms on the heartless conduct of the chief of police in treating an esteemed citizen in such an unheard-of manner.

Reports of all kinds were flying about town. People were so excited that they could hardly attend to business. A great number of the most prominent gentlemen of New York visited the jail, but no one was allowed admittance, or given any satisfactory reason for Deville's imprisonment.

Bail to any amount was offered, but not accepted ; and Deville's friends went away no wiser than when they came.

Such was the state of affairs when the "Evening Post" came out with a short account of the matter. The editor had only received the news just before going to press, but promised to publish an "extra" by eight o'clock that evening, which was waited for with great anxiety.

In the mean time the evening paper had been received by the chief of police, who, on looking at the column headed "Police Reports," saw these words: "Outrageous conduct of the police authorities in arresting our esteemed fellow-citizen, James Deville, Esq., just after he had been united in marriage with the daughter of the distinguished banker, Charles Morton, Esq., etc., etc."

When the chief read this intelligence he rubbed his eyes to see if he were awake, and, finding this to be the fact, read and re-read the article again and again. He remembered now that Allan Dare had sent Belette to him that morning to request that a police force of ten men should be detached under Belette's orders. The ten men under Tormenteur were part of the detective force under the orders of Allan Dare, therefore he did not think it necessary to refer to them in his message to the chief. Allan merely stated that he was going to make an important arrest, and wanted men enough to overawe the crowd.

"Some rascals at the 'Five Points' or the 'Hook,' I suppose," said the Chief. "Allan Dare lets nothing escape ; it's all fish that

comes to his net," and, giving the necessary order, thought no more about the matter.

Now that he saw the result of his action, the chief was nearly beside himself. "Really, Mr. Allan Dare," he exclaimed, "this is going too far; I must pare your nails a little," and, seizing his hat, hurried off to Allan's lodgings.

Arriving there, quite out of breath, he broke into the sitting-room and found Allan Dare quietly reading the paper and smoking a cigar. The chief paused in amazement when he found how Allan Dare was occupying his time, for on his way from the office he had seen nothing but excited groups of men discussing Deville's arrest and damning the stupidity of the police authorities, looking at the chief as if they could annihilate him. This coolness added to the chief's anger.

"By Jove! Mr. Dare," he exclaimed, dropping into a chair and throwing his hat on the floor, "I believe you would stop to eat if the world were coming to an end."

"Very likely, sir," answered Allan Dare, coolly; "eating is a good custom, if one gets the right sort of food, for it keeps both body and brain in order. Have a cigar? it soothes the temper."

"Hang your cigar!" roared the chief. "Read that, and tell me if that is some of your brain-work. See what a pretty kettle of fish you have cooked up. How came you to commit such a blunder?"

"Oh! I've read it all," said Allan, calmly. "I never make mistakes in matters of this kind."

"Tell me, then," said the chief, "how you came to arrest the most esteemed citizen of New York, actually dragging him from the altar on his wedding-day?"

"I did not prevent him from getting married," said Dare. "I waited until the knot was tied before I arrested him, for I was determined he should secure his bride."

"But you have mortified and insulted the first banker in New York, and there can be no reparation for such an outrage."

"Everything must give way," answered Allan Dare, "when the law is to be vindicated. Mr. Morton will be so much more mortified in a short time that he will consider this episode by comparison a trifling matter. When a man has committed crime, I see no reason why he should not be taken from the altar as well as from any other place. Had Deville got away from the church, I have reason to believe he would have given us the slip altogether. I

wanted to capture him when unarmed and powerless to do harm, for this man is of desperate courage, and would sell his life dearly if he had the opportunity."

"But tell me," said the chief, "what is his offense? Has he committed any crime?"

"That depends," replied Allan Dare, "upon what people consider crime. But, not to keep you longer in the dark, I will say that Mr. Deville is the head center of all the principal robberies that have been committed in New York in the last two years. He is an escaped convict from Toulon, in France, having been sentenced to the galleys for a murder committed in Paris. After his escape he went to Brazil, and was there sent to the diamond-mines as a convict. He was four years in this country organizing his plans before establishing himself as a banker. He is the man who pasted all the wafers as signals for assembling his clans. He is the organizer of Hans Hammel's restaurant and Jacob Moses's store. He is the chief of all the pirates that have infested the Hudson, the robber of all the banks. I have spent the latter part of the summer and fall with him, and have watched his every movement. I suspected him long ago from his frequent absences. You know what importance I attach to small matters. The time Mrs. Ruggles was robbed, do you remember me showing you a knife-blade I took from the hole drilled in her door? I kept the article, and on the night of Vandeuken's ball I detected Cole passing something to Deville's pocket. It was Mrs. Vandeuken's diamonds, as I found when I picked his pocket. That ball-room was full of rogues; everybody who wanted to get in did so. The day after the ball I dropped into Deville's bank on business, and saw him in his private office. A penknife with a broken blade was lying on the table. I had one very similar to it in my pocket, and, while Deville went to the cashier for something, I slipped out my knife, snapped off one of the blades, put it in place of Deville's knife, and put the latter in my pocket. Look, sir," continued Allan, "could this be accident? See this broken blade, how it adjusts itself. I have broken a dozen blades to see if I could get one to fit Deville's knife, but the blade I carried with me so long is the only one that suits."

"That is very small evidence," said the astonished chief, "but it is conclusive. Dare, you are the devil, and there's nothing you can not find out."

"Now," resumed Allan Dare, "I will tell you something that will astonish you. Deville was on board the schooner the night

she went down to Sandy Hook. His comrades don't dream that he is Deville the banker. They only know him in disguise as *Robert le Diable*! The schooner towed down a four-oared boat and crew. Deville was in the schooner's cabin, where they were having a grand frolic, and Belette, who can see through a millstone, saw through Deville's disguise. Deville returned to New York in the four-oared boat, and Belette, whose shell is made especially for speed, followed the sound of their oars, and landed as quickly as the pirates. He shadowed Deville to his own door—a very incautious thing for Belette to do, who is usually so careful.

"As I told you before," continued Allan, "this man was convicted of murder in Paris, and sentenced to the galleys. I saw him tried, and felt much sympathy for him, not believing him guilty. As soon as I laid eyes on him here I recognized him, notwithstanding his dark hair and complexion and French accent, which are well assumed. I will still further surprise you. Deville is the author of the practical joke played on Mr. Vandusen which sent him traveling to Cincinnati while the mischief was being played with his gas stock. Deville made a million by that operation, and has invested large sums abroad, but where, I don't exactly know. I have had his bank-safe sealed up, and we can't tell what money he has amassed until we examine that. I have told you enough, I think, to make you understand the matter thoroughly, and hope you will not think I have committed a blunder."

"I hope you can substantiate all your charges."

"I have a State's evidence that can hang every one of these desperadoes. Come with me, and I will introduce you to the gentleman." Rising, Allan led the way to Jacob Moses's place of confinement.

When they entered the room Jacob was hidden by a cloud of smoke which he sent forth from a huge meerschaum pipe. He rose and apologized, saying, "Doo mush smogen dot terbacker ish so petter ash goot dot I never knosh ven I gots ash blenty ash I likah ; dot's goot peer, doo. "Tishn't every beeples ash gits sush goot dipple ash dot. I never tire oph dish blace so long ash der dipple ant der terbacker lashta."

"I must introduce you," said Allan, "to the chief of police," and, turning to that official, he said, "This is Moses Grafft, who robbed Mr. Leonard, and escaped from the penitentiary, eight years ago. He has turned State's evidence."

"Oh, mein Gott!" said Jacob ; "excush me, sir, dot I did not

knowsh yer ; dot's vy I didn't pow ter yer ven yer coomed in, unt I vos pretty full ov peer unt smoque. Unt I'm innoashent ash a suggin big uv all dosh grimes vot dose odder fellers do."

"I want you to tell the chief of police," said Allan Dare, "all you know of these fellows, from the time you first got acquainted with them, and how they operated."

Whereupon the guileless Jacob related, in his peculiar style, all he knew of the robbers, giving many details not necessary to mention here.

Over three hours were spent in this examination, and the chief was satisfied at the end of that time that Allan Dare was the most remarkable detective he had ever heard or read of.

Allan and the chief left Jacob with the assurance that he should be protected from the outlaws, against whom the law would be severely executed.

As the chief bade Dare good-by he said, "I know you have something in reserve you have not told me. I see it in your face. What grand *coup* are you going to show us next?"

"Wait and see," replied Dare. "I think you will admit that I have kept you pretty well amused, since I first introduced myself to your notice in April last, with what you were pleased to call my d—d French system."

"Come, Dare," said the chief, "don't be hard on me. I acknowledge what an infant I am compared to you. I go to my office now perfectly satisfied, and when the four or five newspaper men I shall meet there begin to talk to me about the cruel treatment an eminent citizen has received, and all that, I'll laugh in their faces."

CHAPTER L.

ESCAPE AND DEPARTURE.

THAT night the wind blew strong from the eastward, and the rain fell in torrents. *Robert le Diable* sat in his prison-cell smoking a cigar. By paying a high price he was allowed a candle and cigars, and he sat there as quietly as if nothing had happened. The room he occupied was about ten by twelve feet, with one small window, three by four feet, secured by iron bars an inch in diameter. A

cot, a pine table, and a chair completed the furniture of the apartment; and here the millionaire banker was enjoying himself as if he had selected that mode of life.

It was about eleven at night, and the wind fairly howled around the old prison as if all the demons of the air were rejoicing over *Robert le Diable's* misfortunes. Deville wondered whether Louise was raging over her humiliation, or taking it as calmly as he did. One thing caused him great indignation. She had told him, as he left her, "I shall despise you now more than I would have done, though we are nearer in crime."

To have gained the love he craved, Deville, before this speech, would have committed every crime in the calendar, but now he understood her.

At length his candle began to sputter. He was allowed a certain length, which the jailer knew would be consumed by eleven o'clock, and he would not have the trouble of going around and seeing the lights out. Few of the prisoners were allowed lights, and these, with the exception of Deville, had retired an hour ago.

As he threw up the window to get some air, Deville heard a faint whistle, followed by a peculiar noise, which might be the twittering of a bat, or a swallow in the chimney. He placed his candle in the window until it sputtered itself out, and then he was left in darkness. Then he hung his white handkerchief to the bars, so that it would indicate his room when seen through the flashes of lightning. He knew that Nimble was near the prison and trying to communicate with him, so waited patiently, knowing the wonderful powers of the boy.

Nimble had left home well prepared for his mission, and had watched for some time to find out in which room of the prison his master was placed. Deville had been at the window as much as possible, with his white handkerchief in his hand, and Nimble had located the room perfectly.

Nimble then went to the house where Myra was and took from the secret closet in the wainscot the parcel which *Robert le Diable* had once pointed out to him. It contained the following: Twenty steel screw-rods, eight inches long, with sharp point, and one fourth of an inch in diameter, each with a steel handle at one end. There was a silk line one eighth of an inch in diameter, inlaid with three strands of malleable steel wire. This line was eighty feet long. Then there was a steel instrument four inches long; a small but powerful jack, that could be elongated twelve inches, which would

raise a ton weight to a height of three inches from the ground. Besides these were three lead balls, weighing each one eighth of a pound ; two small files, three very fine steel saws, a small bottle of oil, and a screw-driver.

Nimble secured all these articles on his person in such a manner as not to feel the weight, which, all told, amounted to about four pounds.

The church-clocks struck eleven at the moment when Nimble saw the sputtering of his master's candle. Deville's signal was answered by a low whistle, which could not be heard by any one in that gale but himself.

The rain poured in torrents, and the wind howled around the prison. Few people were abroad, unless on some matter of life or death, and there were no night patrols in those days that amounted to anything.

Nimble had examined every part of the exterior of the jail, and knew what he had to do. He went at once to an obscure corner of the prison-wall, here some twenty-five feet in height. He inserted his first screw-rod in the mortar between the stones, about three feet from the ground, and screwed it firmly in. The next rod was screwed in four feet higher up, and so Nimble progressed, resting his weight on the rods and screwing them in above him until he reached the top of the wall. He then let down the light silk line until it caught the third rod from the top, and secured the end to a screw-rod firmly screwed in the top of the wall. This line was calculated to bear the weight of six hundred pounds.

When the line was well secured to the top, Nimble threw it over into the yard and went down hand over hand, like a sailor. He had with him a small fishing-line some fifty feet in length, and another line, sixty feet long, like the first. At the end of the fishing-line was fastened a bullet, which Nimble threw with great precision, landing it on the floor of his master's room.

It was now an easy matter for *Robert le Diable* to haul up all the instruments he required.

The first thing was to saw off a bar near the bottom of the window, so that he could secure the line which he was to lower himself down by. Then, inserting the screw-jack between the bars, he forced them from their sockets. This was the work of but a few moments, for the jack-screw made sad havoc with the irons, and so twisted them from their holes that Robert was able, with his great strength, to take them out and lay them on the floor.

Securing the instruments about his person, Robert left his card on the table, marked "p. p. c.," and, throwing the bight of the wire rope over the sawed bar, he descended rapidly to the ground.

No trace was left of how he descended, for Robert took his line with him. The rest of his task was easy, everything having been prepared for him. He went easily over the wall, performing, in fact, the feats he had in a manner done during his career as an acrobat.

Nimble stayed behind to remove the screw-bars in the wall, which he did effectually, leaving no signs of his work that any one could detect, and, gathering everything together, followed his master.

Robert le Diable went directly to Myra's home; there he knew no one would be likely to find him, and, even if found, he had means of escape known only to himself. It had been some time since Robert had been to his home, and Myra had waited patiently for his coming. She had been taught patience, but still she longed to see him. She little dreamed that she should see him that night.

She was sitting in the little parlor, dressed in her pretty Albanian costume, looking so lovely that the eye would never tire in gazing upon her. There was a languor in her eye that told unmistakably that she was in love, and was thinking of the loved one. She had just thrown her head back, having for a moment laid aside her embroidery, and, with her hands resting on her lap, was gazing apparently at some memory in the far distance, her lips apart and her pearly teeth just showing between them.

She was a miracle of beauty, and, could *Robert le Diable* have seen her then, he might have drawn comparisons unfavorable to Louise. She listened to the lioness, who was uneasy in her cage on the porch. Then the cuckoo-clock sounded. Myra threw aside everything and flew to the wainscoted room and opened the door, but drew back in alarm, for in Robert's chair a stranger was seated.

The form was like that of Robert, but the face was different. Myra looked like a startled deer springing to meet her mate, but drawing back on seeing another lord of the forest. But when a voice said, "Come in, Myra, my sweet child," she flew to his side, knelt down, and kissed his hand with rapture. Then, raising her head, said, "O Mr. Robert! what have they done to you to disfigure you so?"

She had never seen him in this guise before, and knew him only in his sunburned face and tawny beard, and in no other dress than the brown Scotch tweed he wore when at home. He was a differ-

ent-looking man from the Robert she knew, and the change did not please her.

"They have changed you awfully," she said. "Where is the dear old tawny beard I've known from childhood? It made you look so grand! Why did you let them change you so? Is this the fashion? I do not like it if it is; give me the tawny beard again, your dress of Scottish tweed; it will take me a long time to get sociable with you. To dress you up in this guise is like gilding the lily and painting the rose. Why did you let them do it?"

Robert saw how disappointed the girl was at his looks, and regretted now that he had not quietly gone to his room and changed his clothes before appearing in her presence. He had been taken to prison in his wedding-dress, and had not changed his clothing since. "And what is all this satin for?" continued Myra; "this satin waistcoat and necktie are not half as becoming to you as your speckled scarf. Why, this looks like what I've read of wedding-clothes. Oh! they don't become you; you don't seem like the same one to me! For six years have I known you only in your fustian suit and tawny beard. You're not so handsome as you were."

All this time Robert had been watching Myra's expression as she scrutinized him. "My God!" he said to himself, "how beautiful she has grown! and here am I who, having a pearl at home of purest kind, must needs go fishing in a muddy pool in hope of finding something still more rare. It's like exchanging gold for copper."

"Ah, Myra!" he said, aloud, "the reason you do not like my looks in this dress is because a child clings to its traditions. You should love me just as well in this dress as in the old one."

Myra sprang to her feet, and, approaching him closely, said, inquiringly, "Did you say I should love you just as well in one dress as in another; did you say that to me—I who love you better than all the world beside? It matters not what dress you wear! If you had a landscape near your house that you had gazed at daily for a term of years, would you like to have it marred by taking away some familiar feature? And so I miss my tawny beard, my childhood's friend, and I miss my fustian suit. I've sat upon your lap in that old suit, without the fear of hurting it."

"Come sit there now," said Robert; "you will find I do not think there is danger of your spoiling my clothes."

Myra blushed to the roots of her hair. "Oh, no," she cried, "not now; I'm too old for that."

"Yet only five years ago you nestled in my bosom, and don't

you think I have a right to complain when you grow beyond the limits of infantile intimacy? Do you realize, Myra, how beautiful you have grown?"

"*You* think me beautiful?" she said; "that's all I ask. No other's praise would give me any pleasure."

Robert took her hand in his—a soft, velvety hand it was, and beautiful enough to be a model in a sculptor's studio.

"I once thought I knew a hand more beautiful than this," he said, "but now I see my error. The other hand is dyed in crime; I see it too late! too late! I once thought no eye could beam as bright as hers, but it was a beacon luring me to destruction. I see it now; it beams for all alike; it only looks kindly on me because we are akin in crime. She told me so. I thought *her* face fairer than any in the world. I see a fairer now—one full of kindly love and honest as an angel's, and as I look into those beaming eyes I see a deep well of thought, where no impure idea ever rested. But, ah, too late! too late for me! I thought *her* form perfection; perhaps it was. Perhaps my eyes have changed, and in the fond affection I feel for this sweet child, she seems to me the lovelier of the two. The knowledge has come, but, ah, too late! With Myra I would be linked in one chaste love for life; with *her*, a love linked with crime. *She* only wants me because we are akin in crime. Oh, that I could live over again the past week! I am like a man who, feeling cold, goes to the arctic regions to get warm. How could I expect to gather strawberries from an onion patch, and why had I not seen it all before this hour? I've been stone blind, or God has cursed me for my many sins, and now opens my eyes when it is too late!"

"Of whom are you talking, Mr. Robert?" inquired Myra. "Your eyes look so fierce, your brow so knit in anger! I never saw you so before. Perhaps you only look so without your tawny beard. Oh, let it grow again; put on your fustian clothes, and once more be your own good self."

"Myra," said Robert, "look closely at me. Do you not see the lines of care and woe which mark my face and make me look ten years older than I did yesterday morning? It is all of you; you are the cause."

"Why, what have I done?" she exclaimed, looking alarmed; "have I done aught to offend you?"

"Yes," replied Robert, "you have. I dreamed for many days I was in Paradise with Eve's sweet counterpart, forgetting the little cherub I left at home. I come and find you blooming with such

angelic beauty, with mind so chaste and pure, that now I know the one I thought my Eve was but a counterfeit. My Paradise is here, and yet there is an angel at the gate of this sweet heaven with flaming sword that bars the way and bids me depart from this dear resting-place. I am not fit companion for one so pure as you. I've sold my birthright for a mess of pottage, and now must wander over the world to find a place where I can rest in safety."

"How queer you talk!" exclaimed Myra; "you are tired, and are in need of food. The table is spread in the next room, and all I have to do is to order supper."

"Tell me, Myra," said Robert, "are you loyal to me? Do you forget the loving care with which I trained you in your earlier days, and would you desert me for some other man?"

"Did you not wish me to marry Walter," she replied, "the only man I ever knew besides yourself, and did I not answer No?"

"You love me, then," said Robert, "enough to give up the world for me, to sacrifice all a woman holds most dear, and live, perhaps, to see me fill a felon's grave?"

Myra gazed upon him with looks of horror. "You fill a felon's grave?" she exclaimed. "Great Heaven! what does all this mean? You know you have all my love—the love of my very soul. I'd follow you to the end of the earth barefoot, if need be—but there is some mystery oppressing you. Tell me what it is."

"I will," said Robert, "and then I'll learn my fate. Ten days ago I had a name—an assumed one, it is true—honored and revered by all who knew me. I gave it to one I falsely thought I loved, and now I wake to know I never loved. I'll never wear the foul, false name again. It was not mine at first, therefore no loss to me, but while I live she'll claim me as her own."

"She? Whom?" cried Myra, her face pale as a corpse, and falling on her knees before him. "Oh, tell me all, and let me die at once!"

"I will tell you all," he said, "but only that you may live. I have given you hints enough that I was entangled in love affairs. A woman crossed my path to curse my life for ever. Yesterday I led her to the altar, and was dragged away from her to a prison-cell just as the priest's blessing had been bestowed. We parted at the church-door, never to meet again. The last words she said to me were, 'We are akin in crime,' but, so help me God, with all my crimes I believe I am an angel of light compared to her."

Robert heard a gasp, and, looking down, found that Myra had

fainted. Her face presented the appearance of one dying. He took her in his arms and pressed her to his heart; then opened the window to give her air, but she remained long in an unconscious state. "O God!" he exclaimed, "is this my fate, to know at last her loveliness and then to see her die, when first I realize she loves me as her soul? I'd bid defiance to the ills of life if she could live and be but at my side to cheer me up in the despondency that must from this time forth be mine."

He rubbed her hands and chafed her temples, and when she revived his heart was filled with joy.

When Myra came to herself she was lying in Robert's arms. She struggled to get free; then a flood of tears came to her relief, and she sobbed upon his breast as if her heart would break.

He kissed away her tears and tried to kiss her lips, but she tore herself from his embrace and sank into a chair, where she gave full vent to her grief.

"I see plainly that you hate me," said Robert, "and well I deserve it. I threw away the rose and grasped the nettle, to sting my hand from now until eternity."

"I do not hate you," she exclaimed; "how could I hate the one who has been all to me since first I learned to reason? But there is a barrier between us we can not pass. You have a lawful wife; go to her and do your duty by her, no matter what her character. We must part to meet no more. I'll go to the Convent of the Sacred Cross, and there I'll spend my life offering up prayers for your happiness and praying God to forgive the crimes you say you have committed. The Sisters will welcome me; I know them all, and owe them much for their care and training of my youth."

"But, Myra," said Robert, "what matters it if I gave a name that was not mine to one who was not really worth a name? I choose to cast her off; her last words were that she was my equal in crime. She always made me think she was immaculate. She would not let me kiss her finger-ends for fear her maiden modesty would revolt at the great liberty. I've nothing left me now but you to live for. I have too long neglected my sweetest flower; come with me in my banishment, and let our lives be joined in one."

"That can not be," said Myra. "Would you have me change my whole nature and live contrary to the laws of God and man? Where are all those pure sentiments you once professed and took such pains to have instilled into me? Would you doom my soul to sin? Would that be a meet return for all my love and faith in you?"

Oh, no, you do not mean this! Make me once more happy by disclaiming any evil intent. Much as I love you, I could not live in sin; it would be a daily death to me to know that you were aware of my unworthiness, and in the end you would come to look upon me in the same light as the one whom you say has cursed your life. Oh! I can pray for you in my lonely cell; that is not forbidden, although it will be a sin to cherish a love for one that belongs to another. God will give me strength to bear my great adversity, and in time I may be able to endure with calmness a punishment intended, perhaps, for my good."

"And marry some one else," said Robert, "and break my heart!"

She arose and laid her hand in his. "I promise," she said, "that I will on earth devote myself to God; that no thoughts of love or marriage shall ever find access to my mind; and that my daily prayers shall be offered up to God for you. Go where you may, at morning and at evening, you will know I am on my knees praying for your welfare; and may God protect you wheresoever you go. But promise me one thing—do your duty to the woman you call your wife. With her, life has just begun. I know she is beautiful, for I heard you say so amid all your revilings, which may be deserved or not. You may yet have happiness in store for you. I can have none for years to come."

"And is this," he said, "your final decision? Will you, for want of a mere form, come to a determination that is death to me? What happiness can you enjoy in a gloomy convent, when you know that I am wasting away in grief for your loss?"

"I do not expect happiness; I only look for peace of mind. I have seen the love of a life-time shattered in the dust, for I do not remember the time when I did not love you. Your discovered love is but that of a few hours. I know that you have ever been fond of me, but as regards the holy love I felt for you, you are an utter stranger to it; let it be holy still!"

"O child!" cried Robert, "do not speak so lightly of my love for you, though the devil in his malice has urged me to follow an *ignis fatuus* to lure me to my destruction. I know now that since you first rested on my breast, and I pressed my kisses on your lips, I had loved but you. There's not a day but I have thought of you a hundred times, and your image was in my thoughts the last thing each night before I went to sleep; but that siren lured me against my better judgment, and now I see for purposes of her own. She

never loved me, for she shuddered when I took her hand at the altar. I had never loved but you. I'll never love any one again, and will carry your image to my grave."

"It will add to my happiness," said Myra, "to know that I've been loved. I'll go and be the bride of God; you shall never have cause to be jealous of any man."

Myra had been talking amid sobs and tears, and she looked like some sweet saint trying to redeem a sinner from his errors.

"And now," she resumed, "I must say good-night! I've gone through much, and need repose." She gave him her hand, but he took her, unresisting, in his strong arms, and pressed many kisses on her lips and eyes and face, to which she quietly submitted, raising for the moment hopes in his breast that she would be finally brought to relent.

Myra at length gently repulsed him and went to the door, where she stood looking at him intently, as if to impress his likeness on her memory, and then with one deep sob she rushed from the room.

Robert sank into his chair, as if everything worth living for had departed, and there he sat musing for an hour. The storm howling without was in harmony with his feelings, and the thought struck him that he would like to fall asleep under the pelting rain.

Aysha had been whining on the porch for some time, craving admittance, and Robert went out to let her in. She crawled on her belly, looked strangely at him, and growled until he called her by name. Then she laid her head upon his foot and looked up in his face with her soft eyes, as if she wanted nothing more in life.

"Poor Aysha!" said he, "you are the only one who would follow me over the world despite all obstacles. Yet Myra is right; she could not soil the purity of her soul and live."

He touched a knob in the wall and a bell was heard to ring, and some one knocked at the door. "Tell Walter," he said, without opening it, "that I want to see him at eight o'clock in the morning in my room," and the messenger departed.

Robert led Aysha back to her cage, and kissed her between the eyes, and the animal lay down quietly, though she kept watch all night.

Then *Robert le Diable* went to bed, and tried to forget in sleep the cares that beset him. His last act was to write a few words on a card and give it to Nimble.

When Robert arose the next morning he was once more the

Robert Myra knew, with tawny beard and Scotch suit; and he thought how pleased she would be to see him so dressed. When he went down stairs a note was handed him in Myra's handwriting. His heart misgave him that something was wrong. He opened it, and read as follows :

"Oh, with what pleasure would I have followed you over the world in prosperity and in adversity, but I could not break God's laws! I could not live and have you learn to despise me. I could not live knowing I was committing a crime. I have been weak enough as it is, but I trust God will forgive me. I suffer more than words can tell. I shall be gone to the Sacred Cross before you are up. We part for ever, and if you love me, do not tempt me to reconsider my determination. Live and do good, and that God may forgive your sins is the prayer of
MYRA."

A sob came up from Robert's great chest as he read the note. "It is better so," he said. "Why should I tempt her to do wrong when I saved her, doubtless, from sin in the beginning, and have devoted my life to preserving her purity? God bless and preserve her! He never sent on earth a purer being."

Robert found that Myra had spent the night packing two trunks labeled "Sacred Cross." She had not touched the bed, and had departed without saying good-by to any one.

Robert sent the trunks to the convent, and intrusted to Nimble a package for her labeled "The property of Myra," containing the twenty-five thousand dollars he had put aside for his ward. He did not write to Myra, for he could not find words to express his feelings; he felt as if their parting was final, and as if his life had gone out.

The morning after the escape, when the jailer went his rounds and opened *Robert le Diable's* door, he found the bird had flown, but left his p. p. c. card upon the table. The jailer said nothing to any one, but locked the door and went directly to the office of the chief of police with the news. The latter, as usual, rushed up to Allan Dare's lodgings, and found him just finishing a substantial breakfast and reading the morning paper. "He's escaped!" shouted the chief; "taken all the side out of the jail! What do you think of that?"

"Yes," said Allan Dare, calmly, "I knew it. Master Robert wrote me a note telling me all about it, which I found under my

door this morning at six o'clock. Here it is." And, sure enough, on a large card was written the following :

"**VERRE SAYE** : I have escaped, and it will be useless to pursue me. When you receive this I shall be miles away on the ocean, to return no more.

"Should you attempt to follow me, a hundred bullets will be lodged in your body. You have done your duty like a man, regardless of consequences. I could easily have killed you, but something withheld my hand. Adieu,

"**ROBERT LE DIABLE.**"

"Well," said the chief, "what a wonderful man ! Do you think he is really gone, or is this a device to escape pursuit ?"

"Yes," answered Allan, "he is gone. The man would not lie, and it's just as well, since the gang of robbers is broken up for ever. When the truth is known the people will acquit you of the charge of treating an honest citizen with severity, and you will be lauded to the skies. With all his crimes, he was one of Nature's noble-men."

"What ! that pirate and burglar ?" exclaimed the astonished chief.

"Yes," replied Dare ; "he was brave as a lion, generous as a prince, and true as steel to his friends. What he took from the rich he gave to the poor ; he always took the part of the oppressed, and was modest as a girl. He was the strongest person I ever met, yet it would require the greatest provocation to make him strike a man. He would forgive the greatest injury if one would only say he regretted what had been done. I really loved the man, although I felt it my duty to bring him to justice. It was the most painful thing I ever had to do in my life to arrest him."

"You surprise me," said the chief. "What possible interest could you have in this felon ?"

"Interest !" exclaimed Allan Dare ; "he was my twin-brother, for whom I have been looking for the past ten years."

The chief jumped from his seat. "God in heaven !" he exclaimed, "and could you do all that you have done to your own brother ?"

"I could not violate my oath of office, which exacts of me that I shall do my duty and show favor to no one."

"Dare, you are one man in a million," said the chief, "and I

honor you as I never honored man before. What a pity you should have such a brother !”

“Put him in my place to-morrow,” said Dare, “and he would do his duty as unflinchingly as I have mine. He was pure until degraded and thrown among felons—as pure as any man living. He was sentenced for life to the galleys for a crime of which he was innocent, and, after his escape, the hand of man was against him till he came to New York six years ago. While my brother remained honest every misfortune overtook him. He took to crime and became successful, esteemed, and honored, and there are many more like him in the world. I know one man in New York much more guilty than *Robert le Diable*, who stands at the head of society, and no man for a moment doubts his integrity.”

“Who, in the name of heaven, can that be ?” said the chief ; “if any one but you had said this I would not believe it.”

“Wait and see ; there will soon be revelations made that will shake New York to its center.”

“Dare, you must really let up or you will revolutionize the city, and none of the old landmarks will remain. I don’t know but what it would be better for us to jog along in the old way, and not know so much about other people’s business. This excitement is making an old man of me.”

“Yet you will wake up to-morrow the most famous man in New York,” said Dare ; “you will have broken up the pirate-gang that was a terror all along the river. The prime mover has escaped, and every one who knew him will rejoice thereat. Hundreds of men owe him money, and will be glad never to see him again ; and those whom he has befriended will be glad he got off. The State will be saved the expense of prosecuting him, and if he were acquitted, which is by no means improbable, he might sue us for damages. I think you have managed this whole matter admirably, but you must never let it be known. I congratulate you again, sir, on your success.”

“Allan Dare,” said the chief, “I can’t help thinking you connived at your brother’s escape ; if you did, you were right. I would have done it myself.”

“At all events,” replied Dare, “it can’t be ascertained which of us did it.”

Robert le Diable ate a hearty breakfast after he admitted Walter to his presence in the wainscoted room. “Walter,” said he, “I

am going on a cruise, and shall be absent a long time. While I am gone I will leave you in charge of the house and of my affairs. I want you now to proceed with all dispatch to Gardiner's Bay, near the east end of Long Island, where the schooner lies, and tell the captain to be prepared to sail at a moment's notice. You will go by land as far as Greenport; and don't spare horse-flesh. At Greenport hire a small boat, with sail and pair of sculls, and go down with the tide to the schooner. After delivering your orders, return to me as quickly as possible. You can hire relays of horses on the road, and ought to make ten miles an hour. Leave Brooklyn at two o'clock this afternoon, and that will put you in Greenport at twelve o'clock to-night. You will have no difficulty in getting a boat. It is eleven miles from Greenport to where the schooner lies. You can get there in three hours, and it will take three to return, which will put you in Greenport at six in the morning. Turn in and sleep till noon, and return to me at eleven to-morrow night."

"Yes, sir," said Walter, who, having been supplied with ample means, departed on his mission.

Then Robert rang the bell for Nimble. "My boy," he said, "I am going to give you a final task, after which you will have nothing more of the kind to do. I am going a long journey, and until you can join me you will be amply provided for."

Nimble's lips quivered and a tear stood in his eye. "I will do your bidding, sir," he said, "if it costs me my life."

"Go down to the Battery," said Robert, "and deliver this letter to the captain of the little steamer Joke. Leave in her at ten o'clock this morning. We have now sixteen men in the penitentiary at Albany. Prepare yourself to release them. They have already been notified that relief is near. Four of the turnkeys are in our employ, and have been promised large rewards to wink at the men's escape. Three of the crew were either killed or have died since their capture, and one, who was so badly torn by the dogs, can not be moved. You will require four hundred and eighty feet of line and sixteen saws and files, besides two jack-screws. You will have to carry sixteen pounds weight; are you able to do it?"

"Easily, sir," answered the boy.

"Our men are in the east end of the building, thirty feet from the ground. You will have no wall to climb. If there is difficulty in sawing the bars, after you pass the jacks up you must let them lower them down, and as soon as one party is finished with them pass

them to another. I am informed there are four men to a cell ; if so, your work is comparatively easy. I trust to your wit. As soon as you get the men on board the steamer, put off and keep them all below out of sight, and let the captain land you in a small boat at Pier 12, and make your way to me. You will reach Albany at midnight. Two hours will be sufficient for your work, if it can be done at all, and you can report to me to-morrow at three o'clock. Now go ; you have plenty of money for expenses. Don't fail." And Nimble departed.

Robert then wrote the following letter to his wife :

" Louise, I promised you a glorious career, and one to your taste, and you shall have it. I am, as you know, a marked man, and you will only be reminded of your disgrace every minute you remain here. There is only one hope of peace for you, and that is in living under my care. We are fit companions. If you can not love me, I will at least serve to amuse you, and you can tyrannize over me to your heart's content. Remember now that ' we are akin in crime.' Perhaps your hand is stained deeper than mine ; let us then join fortunes. If you wish to come with me, prepare to follow the person who hands you a red wafer with an initial ' D ' thereon. Bring nothing with you except a plain suit, and a cloak with hood to disguise yourself. Follow the boy without fear. I go from here for ever. If you fail to join me, we shall never meet again. D."

In the mean time *Robert le Diable's* emissaries proceeded on their way. Next day, at precisely three o'clock in the afternoon, Nimble presented himself to his master, merely saying, " Your orders were executed, sir, and the men are all free. I had no trouble. There were only four windows from which to remove the bars. The guards were very lax, and, fortunately, it was raining heavily."

" Thank you, Nimble," said Robert, putting a package in the boy's hand. " There, my boy, are five thousand dollars for you. If we meet no more, that will establish you in some business. You have been the most faithful of all my servitors."

Nimble kissed his master's hand.

" Now," said he, " take this note to my wife ; deliver it to her in person, and alone, and bring me a verbal answer. If she says she will come, tell her you will be at the basement-door at ten o'clock to-night to conduct her."

That night, at eleven o'clock, Walter, who was back before his

time expired, had a carriage waiting at the next square. Presently a muffled figure approached, conducted by Nimble. Handing her into the carriage, Walter got up on the box, and they drove rapidly toward the North River, where they embarked in a small boat and boarded a sloop, which immediately got under way.

The vessel rounded the Battery and passed up the East River through Hell Gate with a fresh wind.

Next afternoon at six o'clock the sloop ran alongside a fore-and-aft schooner in Gardiner's Bay, and *Robert le Diable* and his wife stepped on board.

Louise was conducted to the cabin, where she found herself surrounded with every luxury. The cabin was fitted with such splendor that one might almost fancy the days of the Arabian Nights had returned. She looked around, and said, imperiously, to her husband, "What is this?"

"Let me," said he, "welcome you to the yacht *Myra*, which you now command. Do as you please with her."

"This suits me," said Louise. "To make the affair more piquant, you should be a pirate. I might love you as a corsair's bride as much as I despise you now; you are too uninteresting at present," and she seated herself in a magnificent satin-covered arm-chair and touched a bell. "Tell the first officer," she said to the messenger who answered the summons, "to get under way for Europe; and send the steward here. I command this vessel!"

A negro appeared at the cabin-door. "Champagne," she ordered; and then, turning to Robert, said, "Deville, go on deck and give the course, and let us make a night of it!"

"I am Deville no longer," was the response; "I am, so the police say, *Robert le Diable*, the Hudson River pirate, the great bank robber of New York, the convicted murderer of Count Cassaroles, the escaped convict from the Toulon galleys, the freed convict of the diamond-mines of Brazil—but my hands are unstained with blood. I am your superior in that."

Louise laughed heartily. "I like you better and better. I'll love you madly by and by—as soon as I know more of your virtuous deeds. To think that Conrad's promised bride should end by being the wife of *Robert le Diable*! We'll make a noble pair, and end, no doubt, by filling felon's graves."

The breeze blew strong from the northward, and the vessel passed rapidly through the water. She was a fast sailer, of about

two hundred and fifty tons burden, with a crew of thirty men, including those liberated from the prison at Albany. This was the vessel's last appearance for a long time in western waters.

CHAPTER LI.

SETTLING ACCOUNTS.

THE Mortons were plunged into the deepest grief and mortification by the arrest of Devilla. Mr. Morton did not appear in the street; Mrs. Morton became ill in bed; Louise kept her room; and the rest of the household assembled at meals without exchanging a word.

It may be imagined into what consternation they were thrown when the maid came down from Louise's room at eleven o'clock on the night of Louise's departure and reported that Miss Morton could not be found. The house was searched, but without avail, and the family were compelled to wait until morning in the hopes of hearing of the missing bride. Louise by that time was on board the sloop. Her family could hear nothing of her, and knew not whether she had made way with herself or joined her robber husband. This blow brought Mrs. Morton almost to the verge of the grave. She became delirious, and all she uttered was, "Give up all and save us from the wrath of God."

The news of the escape of the pirates from the Albany prison was published in the evening papers. It was justly considered the most wonderful event of the kind on record, affording an additional proof of the old adage that truth is stranger than fiction.

Nearly every one blamed Louise for going off with a pirate, yet a number of young ladies, comparing notes together, came to the conclusion that they would have been glad of the opportunity to do the same thing.

The old chief of police went as usual to Allan Dare's lodgings to discuss the news with him.

"This is none of our affair," said Allan Dare; "it's our business to catch rogues, and if their keepers let them go again, we can not help it. In one respect it is fortunate, for we have got rid of the whole band for ever. They will never return; you have shown yourself too smart for them."

"Can you give me an idea, Dare," said the chief, "how *Robert le Diable* got out of jail?"

"There is not a prison in this country," replied Allan, "that could keep such a man as Deville. I know his strength, as I know my own, and I could wrench out the bars of a prison-window easier than you could break the back of the chair in which you now sit. It then only requires outside a small boy who has been taught to scale a wall, and a line of one-eighth-inch silk cord, with a bullet at the end to throw up into the prison-window, and the thing is done. With a boy I have, I could escape from any prison in the country."

"How things run in the blood!" remarked the chief; "you and your brother resemble each other very much in many respects."

"Yes," replied Dare, "if I had been unjustly condemned to the galleys, and spent two years with the most debased creatures in the world, doubtless I should have gone to the bad. My brother has been subjected to every temptation in the world, while I, comparatively speaking, have been subjected to none."

"I have never spoken to you of my early life; it is very uneventful compared to my brother's, and is hardly worth relating. I was carried off at the same time he was, and no doubt we for a time served the same brutal master."

"I was placed with another man when I was about eight years of age (as near as I can remember), and instructed in tight-rope dancing and everything else that goes to make up the life of a gymnast. It was all very dreadful, but I bore it, and was proud of the distinction I gained over my fellows. I got less kicks than they did, and that consoled me."

"I ran away from my master when I was twelve years of age. We were performing in a small town in England (whither I had been taken) when my brute struck me with a whip, lacerating me severely. I could not endure such punishment as this, and deserted that night, taking with me the little suit of clothes I wore when stolen away from my parents. I always had a sentiment about those clothes, and determined never to part with them."

"For three days and nights I slunk along in woods and by hedges to escape pursuit, for I knew that my master would leave no stone unturned to find me; I was his best performer among the boys. I obtained favors from the farm-houses along the road; all the farmers' wives wanted to keep me, but I could not be satisfied while within a hundred miles of the wretch who owned me."

"On the fifth day I came to the chateau and estate of Lord Aylesford, a British nobleman, and while I was obtaining food at a farm-house of one of his tenants he came riding by. He was attracted by my appearance and obtained my story from me.

"‘Come with me,’ he said; ‘you shall be Lady Alice’s tiger, and take care of her when she rides out.’ I went, of course, and was soon domesticated in the Aylesford mansion.

"I remained in this kind family for four years, learning nothing but what was good. Lord Aylesford sent me to the parish school, where I learned rapidly. How could I learn crime in such a home? When I was sixteen the whole family were devoted to me, and Lord Aylesford, seeing in me something which led him to believe that I would distinguish myself if I had a helping hand, determined to send me to Oxford.

"I spent three years at that institution, and at the end of that time presented myself to my patron for his approval. He was so pleased with me that he gave me a hundred pounds, with permission to go to Paris and enjoy myself. It was there that I saw the young Robert le Diable tried for his life and sent to the galleys. I looked into the matter, and was brought in contact with Monsieur Carcele, prefect of police, which ended in his persuading me to go on the detective force. I wrote to my patron and told him my wishes; he was satisfied with my plans, and sent me three hundred pounds to commence the world with, and his good wishes. ‘*Voilà tout,*’ as the French say. That’s all my story. My life has been different from my brother’s; had it not been, who can say into what evil ways I might not have fallen?

"Crime is fearfully fascinating. It is apparently so much easier to live dishonestly. I can assure you, sir, that I never committed a dishonest act in my life, and, with the same abilities as my brother, I am poor, while he must have at least a million. However, it will not do him much good, for most of it must be in his bank-vaults. He had not time to remove it. By the way, I have had the bank sealed up, and there should be an examination made to see how much money Deville has left in the vaults. He had many depositors, and they want their money. The books will show to whom money is due."

"Yes," replied the chief, "and we will let the cashier get out all the books and accounts. I don't suppose he is in any way interested in the robberies."

"Oh, no, he is an honest old gentleman, and has been employed

in banks in this city all his life. Robert was too shrewd to trust his secrets to any one. There is not one of his coadjutors that could identify him before a court."

"I forgot, by the way," said the chief, "to ask how you discovered Robert was your brother."

"I suspected it from our resemblance to each other, and I set my boy to watch him when he went to bed. The boy easily got into his room, and saw him strip. He found that he had the same mark on his right arm that I have." Allan here bared his arm and exhibited the peculiar mark upon it.

"Ye gods! what an arm!" exclaimed the chief; "no wonder you can wrench out iron bars. And you ran him to earth, knowing him to be your brother?"

"Yes, and I loved him too; but I felt it was impossible to reclaim him, even if I let him escape."

"Come," said the chief, "let us go to the bank, and get some respectable bankers to be present at the examination."

Whereupon Allan and the chief departed on their errand. Mr. Eton, Mr. Vandeußen, and two other well-known citizens were called upon, and together with the cashier they all proceeded to the bank.

"Only think," said Mr. Eton, "it is but a week since I removed all my money to Deville's bank. He persuaded me that my safe was no safe at all, and I felt sure the money would be all right with him. What a smash-up there would have been if Deville had had time to get away with the money in his safe! but the police were too quick for him."

"Yes," said Vandeußen, "there are three hundred thousand dollars of gas dividends in the safe, which we will have to pay out day after to-morrow; but it was not Deville's policy to make way with deposits. He made too much money by the use of them; they were worth to him at least three per cent. It would take him a month to remove all his deposits, for he would have to do it gradually, and by night. I looked in his safe a week ago, and saw that it was full to overflowing."

"Well, Mr. Cashier," said the chief of police, "let us have the key, and lay out the books. Have your clerks ready to take down the amounts in the safe."

"There is only one man who could open that lock," replied the cashier, "and he has the key."

"Who is he?" inquired Mr. Eton.

"Why, Mr. Deville, sir; he took the key with him."

"Let me see," said Dare; "perhaps I can open the lock," and he took from his pocket a box containing some peculiar-looking keys. After several trials the door flew open. The inner door was opened with more difficulty, but at last the contents of the safe stood revealed.

"Good heavens!" said Mr. Eton to Allan Dare, "you are a dangerous man to be walking about with keys that will open locks such as these. I don't understand it. Who is this, Mr. Chief of Police?"

"He is a locksmith—a friend of mine," replied the chief, "and I will answer for him."

"There," said Eton, "are two bags of mine, containing one hundred thousand dollars in gold. See, they have my name on them," and he picked up one and dragged it out.

"You gentlemen," resumed Mr. Eton, "don't have a chance every day to look at a hundred thousand dollars in gold, and I'll show you mine."

So saying, the worthy Job took out his knife and cut the string that tied the neck of the bag, first examining the seal. "See," he said, "how beautifully cut that seal is! I will break it." So saying, he opened the mouth of the bag and put his hand in, only to withdraw it as if he had been bitten by a serpent.

"Ruined, by heaven!" he howled. "My gold is all gone!" drawing forth a handful of scrap-iron and throwing it on the floor.

Job Eton raged around and swore worse than the army in Flanders, which was rather scandalous, since he was a member of the church. It took some time to pacify him. He insisted on opening the other bag, which gave the same result. Eton sat down and rocked to and fro, as if he had the toothache, while the examination proceeded.

It was soon discovered that there was not a dollar in the safe. There were bundles of paper, made up and marked as if they were large sums of money, but everything in the way of cash, including the gas dividends, had disappeared. It wasn't worth while to lock the door again, as there was really nothing to secure.

"Before we leave," said Dare, "let me see how Deville got off with the money."

Examining the safe closely, he found a neatly fitting trap-door in the bottom; this was pried up, and disclosed another trap-door fastened below with a heavy bolt. Going down-stairs, the secret

was disclosed. An iron door opened into the bank-cellar, through the entrance of which a very narrow wagon could just pass.

At night, when all was quiet, Deville, no doubt, would visit the cellar, and placing the wagon under the trap, fill it and drive it away himself. Allan Dare demonstrated how this could be done, and declared he was satisfied that Deville had no confederate in helping him to remove the money.

"My God!" exclaimed Eton, "the money must be somewhere in the city; it must be found."

"You will never hear of it again," replied Dare. "Deville had a fast schooner, and it all went on board of her."

A crowd gathered around the bank; every one wanted to see what was going on, and the story was soon told. Threats were made to demolish the bank; but that would not restore the depositors' money, and, as the building belonged to Deville and could be sold for the benefit of those concerned, it was concluded to let it stand.

On examining the bank-books, it was discovered that Deville had removed, at different times, six hundred thousand dollars in deposits, besides some two millions of money that he had made in various ways—quite enough to make him comfortable for the remainder of his life.

Here was matter of tremendous interest for the newspapers. More copies of papers were sold that afternoon than ever before in the history of New York. The chief of police was acknowledged to have achieved a great triumph in breaking up the band of pirates and burglars. It was weeks before the excitement subsided. Indeed, it was a long time before the papers ceased to mention the matter. The story became finally known in all its details. There was so much to learn on the subject that the editors had not time to hunt up all the facts connected with the case, and therefore they had to invent what is now known as the reporter, an amiable, modest kind of person, who caters to the public taste and helps fill his employer's paper with the most spicy specimens of news.

A few days after *Robert le Diable's* escape Allan Dare went to see Jacob Moses, *alias* Moses Grafft, and found him, as usual, enveloped in smoke, with a bottle of beer before him, of which he had partaken abundantly. His ugly face glowed like a full moon, and his ferret-eyes twinkled with satisfaction.

"Ah, mishter!" said he, "I'm so glat ter sees yer! I'm a leedle lonesome, ant I vants yer do led der leedle poy vot vash mine tishes,

ant vot I lofes so mush, just to comes unt pass der leedle times mit me. I lofes dot leedle poy ash neffer I loved liddle poys pefore, unt he can tole me vot vay he found out all dose toors unt dose seored blaces in der house vot I keeps mine restorang in. Dot vas a smard leedle poy ash neffer I see. He vas too smard vor von leedle poy ash dot, unt he fount oud everyding I doesh. Vell, vell, I neffer see sush leedle poy as dot, unt I lofes him ash I neffer lofes noddin pefore."

"Jacob," said Allan Dare, "I come to tell you that you are free to go out. Your leader has escaped, and all his men with him. He is gone, never to return. You are perfectly safe from harm. You complied with your promise, and told me all I wanted to know, which enabled me to break up a nefarious gang of thieves. To secure you against want in your old age, you will be permitted to keep a junk-shop in the old store, but you will be under watch for a time. If you lead a proper life you will be taken care of."

"Dank yer," said Jacob; "ant der bosh haf escape, eh? Vell, vot I tole yer? Ant he tuk out der sides ov der prison? No? Vell, vot I tole yer? Ant yer dinks he'sh gone? No, he neffer goesh ant lef dis breddey pishness. Ah, mein Gott! it vos a puterful pishness vot he lofed so mush. Vell, I waids a leedle. I likesh dish place—blendy terbacker, blendy peer, vot more ash dot doesh a mans vont? Pud I vill takes a leedle valk ter rest mein leks vot ish swell mid trinkin' so mush peer. Put yer mint vot I shay. Neffer drust dot mans; he comes ven yer neffer dinks. Mein Gott! how he likes mit der cats mid nine talesh! Ant ven yer don't know yer gets der knife in yer hearts. Dot's vot yer gets some ov dose days; ant ven I keeps mein junk-shops, dot's vot'll habben mid Yacob Moses cos I haf giffen State evidence. No, I likesh dish blace mit der peer ant der terbacker; put I vill go ant sdretch mine leks."

So Jacob went out and spent a few hours in his old drinking-dens, wandering as far as the Battery to get a sniff of the salt air. "Mein Gott!" said the worthy Jacob, "dish ish more petter as goot; neffer I enshoy mineself so petter ash dish, ant I not pe damt fools again ant risks mine neks; no, I shall neffer no more breaks der laws." It grew dark, and Jacob said, "I vill home now goes ant trink mein peer and smokes mein pipe vot I don't pay noddings for."

As he turned to depart a long knife was thrust into his heart, and Jacob dropped upon the ground, having only time to ejaculate, "Vell, vot I toles yer? dot mans neffer go undil he kills effery-poddy!"

Jacob's body was found not long afterward by an old watchman, with a paper pinned over his heart, on which was written, "So die perjurers and traitors." Jacob Moses, *alias* Hans Hammel, *alias* Moses Grafft, was buried in Potter's Field.

Everything now became so quiet about the city of New York that time hung heavy on Allan Dare's hands, and he determined to go in search of his mother and sister. He had employed the boy Chic to constantly shadow Mr. Morton, to see where he went, and with whom he held communication. But, with all Chic's cleverness, he could learn nothing.

The name of the chief of police had become celebrated all over the country, and the police authorities of many of the principal cities had put themselves in communication with him, in order to obtain an insight into his system. About this time he received a letter from the Governor of New Jersey asking his assistance and advice. The governor informed him that there had grown up along the New Jersey coast a powerful organization, known as the Barnegat Pirates, and although all the legal power of the State had been invoked, it had failed to put them down.

The organization had so increased that it had become a disgrace to the State, and the inducements to join the pirates were so great that it was impossible to obtain a force to arrest the perpetrators of the outrages, for those who were sent on that mission generally joined the marauders.

In those days there were two light-houses on Navesink hills, and one at Sandy Hook, with one or two range beacons for the swash channel, and to cross the outer bar. There was also a light-house at Barnegat Inlet, sixty miles distant. Whale-oil was used for lighting; the lamps were poor and badly cared for. At the best of times these lights were hardly visible six miles off shore, and if the weather was hazy they could not be seen at all. The lights were frequently extinguished either by accident or design, and our light-house system, now the best in the world, was at that period a crying disgrace. In consequence, if vessels came on the coast with an easterly gale they ran great danger of getting ashore among the breakers.

The Jersey coast was strewn with wrecks from one end to the other. When a gale came on, it was the custom for the pirates to raise two lights on poles to correspond to the Navesink lights, with others to represent the Sandy Hook light, and smaller ones to represent the beacons.

These false lights were generally placed about sixteen miles south of Navesink, so that a vessel, mistaking them for the light-houses, would run in for them and find herself among the breakers. Then, when signals of distress were made, the Barnegat pirates would assemble, and, if the sea was not too heavy, would go off to the vessel and plunder it, the crew getting ashore if they could. Everything that reached the beach was considered *flotsam and jetsam*, and people who obstinately persisted in claiming what was their own stood a chance of being knocked in the head.

Ten or twelve vessels had already run ashore between Navesink and Barnegat, and there had been so many complaints of the atrocities committed that the Governor of New Jersey determined to put a stop to them. This was the cause of the correspondence between the governor and the chief of the New York police.

The governor informed the chief that he would pay the men five dollars a day as long as they were employed in the service, and the officer in charge would receive twenty dollars a day. Twenty blank commissions as police officers of New Jersey were sent signed, to be filled in by the chief.

The latter, as usual, repaired at once to Dare's lodgings. "Dare," said he, "what do you think of this?" throwing down the letters.

Dare examined them, and after a few moments said: "I see no objection to it. The pay is none too much for the labor to be done, for there will be some hard knocks and bloody work. Those Barnegat pirates are desperate fellows, and won't stick at trifles. I shall want twenty men at least, and I suppose New Jersey will pay the bill, if the next peach crop comes out well; otherwise we will never get our money. But I am feeling badly, and the fresh winds from the Atlantic, cold as they are, will do me good. Besides, your honor would like to have the credit of breaking up those Barnegat pirates, and you shall have it."

"None of your gammon, Dare," said the chief; "if you don't take care I'll tell the newspapers who is the real person to whom is due the credit of breaking up the nest of pirates and robbers, and they'll want to make you an alderman."

"Heaven forbid that any such misfortune should happen to me!" exclaimed Allan. "Your honor would never forgive yourself if you were to peach on me. Oh, no, keep all the honor, and let me enjoy the excitement of the chase, for it is by that I live. You see, I am very much like my brother. He would have liked

just such a job as the one we have in prospect; all his millions will not make him happy."

It was soon arranged that Allan Dare should undertake this new job, and the Governor of New Jersey was informed by the chief of police that he would detail a force for the purpose.

Allan Dare determined, before he left the city, to ascertain from the man that had accosted Carrolton in the street all that was to be known of the reputed father of Flossy. He therefore sent for the man, and questioned him.

He ascertained that about a year before Brice had been detected in embezzling funds belonging to the Bank of Liverpool, and had also committed forgery to a considerable amount.

The man stated that Brice had, some fourteen years previous, been appointed trustee to the estate of his deceased brother, who had left his daughter Flossy the sum of £50,000. Brice had adopted Flossy at the age of six years, and brought her up in the belief that she was his daughter. It was supposed he had squandered a good deal of the money, but a portion being invested in "the three per cents," he could not dispose of it, as he was hard pushed, and had to run for his life, so that something of what Flossy's father had left her still remained.

Dare had to play a bold game to get Carrolton in his power. Although he had caused him to be watched incessantly, he had never been able to detect him in a violation of the law. He determined, therefore, to go to Brice and accuse him to his face of the charges against him, and have Flossy removed from under his charge.

He gave the informer a place on the detective force, to have him always at hand, and, dressing himself as Vere Saye, proceeded to Carrolton's residence in Chambers Street.

When he reached the house Flossy and her supposed father had just finished dinner, and the latter, with a whisky-bottle in front of him, was lighting his pipe.

They talked for some time on different subjects. At length, while Flossy was absent from the room, Vere Saye suddenly remarked to Carrolton, "Do you remember a friend of yours, Mr. Robert, of whom your daughter once spoke to me, who was so kind to you both, and to whom Flossy promised to introduce me? How is it I never see him? Where is he?"

At this Carrolton rose from his chair and walked to the other side of the room.

"Did you hear me, Mr. Carrolton?" asked Dare. "Who is your friend Robert, of whom your daughter thinks so much?"

"He is a gentleman of my acquaintance," said Carrolton; "that is sufficient, is it not?"

"Are you connected with him in business?"

"It seems to me," said Carrolton, "that you are too inquisitive, in fact, I may say intrusive"; and he put his feet on the table.

"That depends," said Vere Saye, coolly.

"Whatever your relations with my daughter may be," said Carrolton, "they can scarcely justify your interference in matters that don't concern you."

"Your daughter and myself have no relations together," was the reply.

"Are you not engaged to her?" demanded Carrolton, in a harsh voice; "if you are not, you ought to be."

"That is my affair," said Vere Saye, "and one in which you have no right to interfere."

"The deuce you say!" replied Carrolton; "doesn't concern me, eh? I suppose, then, you will walk off with her when it suits your convenience. You had better ask my consent first, and d—n me if you'll get it!"

"I don't think your consent necessary," said Vere Saye.

"Do you know to whom you're talking Mr. Vere Saye?" exclaimed Carrolton, walking up to the other in a blustering manner. "I've shown men the door for less impertinence than you've been guilty of."

Vere Saye laughed heartily, as if tickled with the idea. "Well," said he, "suppose they didn't take the hint, what then?"

"Then I kicked them out!" howled Carrolton, boiling over with rage.

"Ah," said Vere Saye, as if to himself, "this person calls himself a gentleman, and see how he behaves. He can't be Flossy's father; I don't believe his blood runs in her veins."

By this time Carrolton's temper was ungovernable, while Vere Saye was laughing heartily at the condition into which the old bully had worked himself.

"I'll give you five minutes to leave this house!" roared Carrolton, taking out his watch; "and if you don't go then, I'll break your bones!"

"I'll leave when I get through with you," was the reply; "but

before the five minutes are up you will be too glad to apologize to me for your brutal conduct."

Carrolton stood looking at his watch, his face flushed and his fist clenched. At the expiration of the five minutes, pointing to the door, he said, "Now go, or, by G—d! I'll turn you out neck and heels."

"Mr. Brice," said Vere Saye, "you must apologize to me for your language, or I will expose you as a forger, a defaulter, a betrayer of trust in squandering your niece's estate, and the confederate of the banker Deville, *alias Robert le Diable*."

Carrolton stood as if petrified, but, recovering himself in an instant, exclaimed, "You know too much!" and, rushing upon Allan, aimed a blow at his throat. But Dare stood cool and immovable, and, catching his antagonist with his right hand, threw him to the floor with such force that he lay there stunned.

Before the bully had time to recover his senses Allan Dare had ornamented his wrists with a pair of neat iron bracelets.

Flossy, who had been witness to the affair through the glass door from the next room, now rushed in and clung to Allan Dare's arm, crying, pitifully, "Oh, save my father; don't hurt him! You never loved me! He didn't hurt you!"

"Poor child!" said Dare. "This man is not your father, but your oppressor, who has cheated you out of the fortune your father left you. Now, Miss Flossy, trust in me—at least in this case. Sit down and listen to what this bad man will say."

Brice began to come to, and looked at Dare in amazement. "You must be the devil," he said, "to handle me in that way. No man in England could do that;" and he endeavored to rise, but was too much bruised to do so. "What does this mean?" he exclaimed, holding up his manacled hands. "What do you propose to do with me?"

"I am an officer of the law," replied Dare, "and I want you as the confederate of *Robert le Diable* in the great gas swindle. There is also a charge against you for robbing the Liverpool Bank, and, although there is no extradition treaty, the Governor of New York will, no doubt, surrender you to the British authorities if satisfied that you are guilty."

"My God!" exclaimed Brice, "is there no hope for me?"

"None, unless you confess in the presence of Flossy that you are not her father, and have swindled her out of the fortune her father left her."

"What he says is partly true, Flossy," said Brice. "I have not done my duty by you ; but you have still thirty thousand pounds in your own name invested in the three per centa."

Flossy all this time was in the greatest distress, and cried piteously. Dare did all he could to soothe her, but she only begged to have her supposed father released.

"I love you, Flossy," said Dare, "but I must do my duty. When you understand everything you will thank me. For the present, Mr. Brice must leave you, and you will have to stay for a few days with Mrs. Eton."

Flossy declared she would not leave her father, as she still called him ; and Dare, not to waste any more time, raised the window and blew his whistle, whereupon Belette and Tormenteur, who had been stationed hard by, made their appearance.

"Take charge of this man," said Dare, "and produce him when he is wanted."

They raised Brice to his feet and supported him, for he could scarcely stand. Flossy threw her arms around him, but he pushed her away. "Stop your d—d blubbing !" he exclaimed. "I am glad the farce is over. You were always a nuisance, and I thank that man for taking you off my hands." Brice was led away to occupy the room where Jacob Moses was lately confined.

Flossy stood amazed at receiving such treatment from Brice, and, having no one else to lean upon, turned to her lover. Allan Dare held out his arms, and she rushed into them. He did all he could to soothe her, and then told her the history of her uncle's crimes.

"Flossy," he said, "what I tell you is true ; instead of being an escaped convict, I am an emissary of the law. So you must know me for the present, but I will watch over and protect you. You have been dreadfully wronged by Brice, but you must trust in me. Poor child !" continued he, "you have no idea how many rascals there are in the world, but I will soon place you under the care of a protector, who will never let you know unhappiness."

Allan Dare sat an hour with Flossy, until she was perfectly herself again, then told her to pack her trunks and be ready to move when he should send for her. He called in about an hour with a carriage, and conducted Flossy to Mrs. Eton's, informing that lady that Flossy's father was obliged to leave her for a short time, and requested that she would take charge of Flossy for a few days.

Mrs. Eton was only too glad to do so, for she was devoted to Flossy, and was dreadfully cut at the way in which her friend De-

ville had turned out. Her husband cursed his name every hour in the day. Flossy, she thought, would be a godsend at this time—as a peace-maker between Mr. Eton and herself.

As for Mr. Job, he laid all the blame of his ill luck at his wife's door; "for," said he to Mrs. Eton, "if you hadn't domiciled him in this house, and made people believe him an angel in disguise, I never would have trusted the fellow."

Mr. Eton was delighted to welcome Flossy to his house. "Don't think," said he to her, "that we are bankrupt on account of that rascal Deville." No, no, the house of Eton & Co. can stand twice as heavy a loss without wincing."

The old fellow was, in fact, very fond of Flossy, and it seemed to him like a burst of sunshine when she entered his house.

What with Mrs. Eton's regret at the loss of Deville's society, and Mr. Eton's ill humor at the loss of his money, the Eton mansion was not altogether a pleasant place, but Flossy's presence put a new aspect on affairs. She was like a gleam of sunshine penetrating every crack and cranny. Mrs. Eton had some one to whom she could relate her woes, and Flossy could talk of her love.

"Ah, Flossy!" Mrs. Eton would say, "I wish I had married Frederic; I would have the love left now at least. At present I have neither love nor money. It's all very well for Job to talk about the house of Eton & Co. being able to stand the loss, but, Flossy, dear, the trouble of getting five dollars for marketing out of Mr. Eton is positively shocking! We have had to reduce our allowance of milk to two gallons a day. My millinery and shoe bill last month was only nine hundred dollars. Isn't it dreadful, Flossy? Then to think of having to discharge the housekeeper and attend to accounts myself! Altogether, a woman's life is a hard one when she marries an old brute who objects to her flirting with handsome men, and won't allow her to spend as much money as she wants. For my part I was so innocent when I married that I thought all the men had to do was to make money, and that women kept the check-book, and their husbands had to come to them if they wanted any cash. But, Flossy, this is a world of disappointment; take my advice, and make your husband, when you marry, settle so much on you for pin-money."

"Oh!" said Flossy, tossing her head, "I have thirty thousand pounds of my own, and when I marry I am going to allow my husband fifty dollars a month and pay his cigar bill. There are not many wives who would do that!"

"When a man marries a woman for money," said Mrs. Eton, "he ought not to be allowed that much. Men are horrid, mercenary creatures any way, and ought to be made to work for their living. My old bear has a dozen clerks working for him, and yet he won't even allow me a housekeeper. I think if he had to keep the accounts of this house, including my millinery bills, it would soon break him down." And she rang the bell.

When the servant came she said, "Go to Mr. Phaeton's livery-stable and tell him to send me the finest landau he has, with the best pair of horses. Come, Flossy, let's go and look at Madame Bobinet's bonnets. She has on hand some of the prettiest little French hats you ever laid eyes on, *à la Marie Antoinette*, and none of them cost over one hundred and fifty dollars. My old bear won't find it any cheaper putting down his carriage, I can tell him."

CHAPTER LII.

THE BARNEGAT PIRATES.

ALLAN DARE, having received the necessary authority to undertake the reform of the Barnegat pirates, prepared for the work assigned him. He chartered a large center-board sloop with light draught of water, fitted the hold comfortably to accommodate twenty men, reserving the cabin for his own use and that of such persons as he might wish to take with him.

Everything being in readiness, he sailed from New York on the last of December, with the expectation of being absent about twenty days. Chic was taken along to wait in the cabin, while Belette and Tormenteur had charge of their respective quotas.

It was blowing a fresh breeze from the northeast, and the sloop made rapid headway toward Sandy Hook, and, crossing the bar, proceeded south and ran into Shrewsbury River.

The wind had been gradually hauling to the eastward and "moaning," as the sailors say, through the rigging, portending a heavy gale.

The waves began already to roll in heavily on the beach, breaking for a quarter of a mile off shore. The haziness increased, until Sandy Hook light could not be distinctly seen. Then light rain fell, and all idea of the weather's clearing was abandoned, and the

sloop, getting under way from her anchorage, sailed up to Red Bank, some five miles farther up Shrewsbury River.

It was very desirable that the arrival of the sloop with such a crew on board should not be known to the inhabitants of the coast, otherwise the news would be transmitted with great rapidity to all quarters. It was arranged, therefore, that only three men should be on deck at a time, and that no unusual lights should be displayed anywhere about the vessel.

The sloop had hardly been made snug at her anchorage when a small steamer was reported coming up the river. This attracted little notice from Allan Dare, as small steamers were plying between New York and Shrewsbury.

The steamer passed the sloop and went higher up. "That," said one of the sloop's crew, "is the Little Joke. I wonder what she is doing down here, as she seldom goes outside the bay of New York. Her captain is a hard bargain."

On hearing this remark, Allan Dare began to question the man, and found that the captain of the Little Joke had been up before the authorities several times for smuggling, but each time had been released for want of proof. As the prevention of smuggling formed no part of Dare's duties, he thought little more of the matter.

At ten o'clock that night a regular easterly gale had set in thick and rainy, and Dare thought to himself, "If ever these Barnegat pirates are going to set false lights they will do it to-night." He called Belette and Tormenteur, and ordered them to have everything in readiness to land. The sloop was anchored close to the east side of the river, to be under the lee, and, being provided with a good four-oared boat, there was little trouble in landing. In twenty minutes after giving the order Allan Dare and all his men were on shore.

He now struck out in a southeast direction for the coast. The night was dark, the ground rough, and a number of little streams had to be passed; but Dare had a hardy set of men with him, who little minded exposure or fatigue. At midnight they heard the roar of the breakers rolling in upon the beach, about half a mile distant. The wind howled dismally, and torrents of rain penetrated their heavy overcoats. They passed several small farm-houses, but there was no sign of life about them—not even the glimmer of a candle through the darkness.

The men's coats were now becoming ice-covered, the rain freezing as it fell, and it would evidently not be possible for them to

continue much longer without shelter. To ask for shelter would hardly do, for their numbers and appearance would betray their errand, and probably defeat the purpose for which they had come. What to do under the circumstances was the problem, and for once in his life Dare felt like backing out.

A large oak-tree gave them temporary shelter, which was better than nothing, though the icicles blown from the branches rattled constantly on the men's heads.

If the pirates were going to hang out their false lights, Dare felt certain they would have done it before this; but he did not know the ways of those miscreants. The lights would not be put up when any one would be likely to be moving about his house, and hence it was generally two o'clock before the outlaws commenced their operations.

The men had taken occasional draughts of whisky, but that afforded only temporary relief. Dare finally concluded to return to the sloop and keep a watch from her masthead.

Just as he made up his mind to return his attention was drawn to a light, not larger apparently than the flame of a candle, which shone through the clapboards of the kitchen attached to a farmhouse near which Dare's men were sheltered. Allan gazed steadily for a moment, when three or four more small lights appeared. "Men!" he shouted, "that house is on fire"; and in a moment the back building was in flames.

The sudden glare of light exposed everything to view, and by the blaze the figure of a man could be seen, with something like a portmanteau in his hand, stealing along the fence.

"Stop that man, Belette and Chic!" cried Allan; "the rest of you put out the fire."

The light frame back building burned rapidly, and the flames were hurled around in wild eddies by the winds; and now Dare showed his giant strength. He tore off the weather-boarding from the burning building as if it had been paper, and hurled the upright framing to the ground. The kitchen soon lay upon the earth, a mass of burning rafters and planks, while, the rain pouring heavily and the wind momentarily abating, the fire was soon extinguished.

The men worked in silence under the direction of their leader, and, when Dare pulled down a part of the building, they would beat out the fire with fence-rails, or trample it out with their heavy boots.

Fortunately, but a small part of the house was destroyed. The gable-end of the main building was of brick. The house was originally built of brick, and had at one time been nearly consumed by fire. The end least damaged, with some fifteen feet of side-walls, had been retained, and a frame extension added to it. This, and the heavy oak door between the kitchen and the main house, saved the latter from destruction.

The wind beginning to blow again with great violence, and the rain to fall heavier than before, the men took shelter in a wash-house some twenty feet from the burnt kitchen.

The fire seemed to have attracted no attention from the neighboring farm-houses, the nearest of which was nearly a mile away. If seen at all, it was doubtless thought to be a burning hay-rick, and people were not going to turn out on such a night merely to save a hay-rick.

After a while the rain held up, but there was still no sign of a living being in the house. The building was rather a long one, running east and west, and a fire might easily have caught in the back kitchen and not be known to any one in front. The noise of pulling down the burning rafters would hardly be heard in such a gale, and, the window-shutters being solid, the light of the fire would not penetrate them. If there were men about the house, they would attribute the noise to ravages of the storm among the out-buildings, which could be repaired by daylight; and women would, of course, not leave the shelter of their rooms.

While Allan Dare was thinking over all these things, Chic came in, nearly exhausted, and laid a light leather portmanteau at his master's feet, saying, "I think that will tell the tale, sir."

On examination, it was found to contain a gallon canteen partly filled with spirits of turpentine, and several bunches of tow.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Dare, "some villain set fire to the house. It must be some of the scoundrels that are engaged in these wrecking affairs. We have a hard gang to deal with, and with such a beginning it is hard to say what will be the ending. This is evidently an act of revenge. Where did you find this portmanteau, Chic?"

"Well, sir," replied the boy, "me and Belette gave chase to the fellow we saw, and Belette outran me, but he fell across a log and sprained his ankle. He is coming this way slowly, and some one ought to go and help him along. I didn't lose sight of the man, and was almost at his heels when we came to a small stream.

As he stooped to jump I stuck my penknife into his sitting-down place. He gave a yell and dropped this here portmanteau, then jumped into the water and waded across. I was dead blown by that time, and saw no more of him. I couldn't have captured the fellow anyhow, but his luggage is evidence of some kind."

"And good evidence it is," said Dare. "Two of you can cut across the way we came and try and capture the Little Joke and any one who tries to get on board. I am sure that vessel has something to do with this."

"Now, men," continued Dare, "if we are found here we shall incur the suspicion of having set fire to the house. All the wreckers along the coast will turn out, and, if they find we are police-officers, they will attack us under pretext that we are the incendiaries. We must rouse the people in the house, if there are any."

So saying, he knocked loudly on the front door, and at length a window-shutter in the second story was opened and a gentle voice asked what was wanted.

"Your kitchen has burned down, madam," said Dare, "but I and my men succeeded in putting out the fire."

"How do I know that you are telling the truth?" said the voice. "Good Heavens!" it exclaimed, suddenly, "the cook was in the building! Is she safe?"

"We saw no one," answered Dare; "but if the cook was in the building she must have perished."

"My dear sir," said the voice, "how can I trust you? I am a lone woman here with my daughter. How do I know but what you wish to do us harm?"

"If we wanted to harm you," answered Dare, "we could do it without standing out here all night. Your house has been set on fire, and you may need protection. Twenty men are not going to harm two lone women. I hope there is chivalry enough left to prevent that."

"You seem to talk like a gentleman," said the voice, "and I feel like trusting you."

"I am a Government officer, madam," said Dare, "and my business is to protect, not to harm."

"Then I will dress myself and come down to let you in."

In a few moments the key was heard to turn in the lock, but the door did not open. The lady pulled from the inside and Dare pushed from the outside, but, in spite of their efforts, the door remained closed.

Then Dare examined carefully, and found there was an iron hasp screwed on to the door-post and on to the door, which prevented the latter from being opened. "By Heaven!" he exclaimed, "some demon has intended to burn these people up!" The thought was almost too horrible to entertain. He soon wrenched off the hasp and opened the door.

The lady was now standing in the front entry with a lantern in her hand, and coming down the stairs was a beautiful girl, whom Dare at once recognized as Mary Samson.

The lady who held the light was pale, with large dark eyes and snow-white hair, and Allan Dare at once recognized his mother, from the description that had been given him. His heart gave a great gulp, and he could only murmur, "At last! at last!" He did not, however, lose his self-possession, not intending to make himself known immediately, but determined never again to lose sight of his mother and sister.

He now suspected who the person was that had attempted to murder his mother and sister, and he determined to arrest him under the charge of murder and arson.

Mary Samson looked closely at Allan Dare as if it were some one that she had seen before, but it was hardly possible to recognize in the red face and beard of Allan Dare the elegant and handsome Vere Saye whom she met at Hawks' Roost.

Mary stepped past the crowd of rough faces into the parlor, and stood with her arm around her mother, as if to protect her. As Dare looked at these two, whom he loved better than anything else on earth, he could not help thinking, "Was there ever anything so beautiful in the world?"

The contrast between the mother and daughter was indeed very great. The elder woman, with her marble skin and long white hair, with her large brown eyes, looked like some beautiful madonna sent on earth to heal the woes of humankind.

Agnes was as perfectly collected as if alone with Mary, and with nothing to dread. Poor woman! she had passed through so much in her life that she had ceased to feel excitement except in regard to Mary. If anything had happened to herself, she would simply say, "God, thy will be done," and her spirit would depart to realms of bliss, to become an angel in heaven—she who had been an angel on earth for so many years, and had borne so meekly all the vicissitudes of life.

So little did these two frail women seem fitted to come in con-

tact with the rough crowd around the building that Dare determined, in order that they should not be put to any inconvenience, that no hint should be given that an attempt had been made upon their lives, but would induce them to go back to bed as soon as possible.

"My dear madam," he said to Agnes, "I beg you will return to your rooms and try to rest. We will guard your house until daylight."

"I am very uneasy," said Agnes, "about my servant—a good and faithful woman, who, I fear, has perished in the flames, unless she has wandered off to seek assistance from the neighboring farm-houses."

"Leave all to me, madam," said Dare. "I will cause a search to be made for your servant, and I beg you will let my men build a fire in your dining-room to dry their clothes, after which we can retire to the wash-house, where we can make out very well for the rest of the night. I don't hesitate to tell you, madam, that we are here to put a stop to the decoy business that is carried on along the coast, for the purpose of enticing vessels on shore, by hanging out false lights."

Mary started. Every now and then, as Allan Dare was speaking, she recognized certain inflections of the voice, though when she looked at him the illusion of his being like Vere Saye vanished. She sighed, and thought to herself, "Where are those two young men who called me their little sister, and where is dear Harry? Shall I ever see him again?"

A fire was soon kindled by the men in the great fire-place, which, when in full blaze, threw a genial heat over the room. Then Agnes produced from the closet some bread, butter, and coffee, and invited the men to help themselves and remain all night in the dining-room. Then bidding them good-night, she retired to her room with Mary.

How Dare longed to clasp his mother to his breast and tell her he was one of her long-lost boys, who would never leave her again during her life! But when he discovered himself to her it must be when there should be none present but themselves; when he could pour out his feelings without witnesses.

"Good Heavens!" he said to himself, "how beautiful my mother is! She is scarcely less so than my lovely sister. It is worth the lonely pilgrimage I have endured through life to be so blessed in the end."

Then he mused over the incidents of the night, as he sat drinking his coffee which one of the men had made, and wondered if all this was accident, or the interposition of Providence. "I am afraid," he said to himself, "that my friend Lindsay would have the better of me in an argument. Here is this scoundrel Morton hiding these poor women away in this out-of-the-way place, biding his time to make way with them, waiting for winter because he thought it would be impossible at this season to extinguish a fire once kindled. I am led to this very house—though, when I come to think of it, the road leads this way. We stop in the rain, which was not unnatural, seeing that this is the last house on the way to the beach. I felt as if I could not tear myself away from under that tree, where we really had no shelter, and why we stayed there I could not tell myself. Yes, that was more than accident; it *was* Providence, or some spiritual agency that dictated to me what to do. Then the fire breaks out; I see the incendiary escaping; I send in pursuit, and obtain evidence that it is either the same man or his agent that burned Gale House.

"The possession of the portmanteau would not be evidence, but Chic put a mark on the fellow, whoever he was, that will indicate him two months hence. A blade three inches long and half an inch wide leaves a mark that does not heal up in a day. Then I find my mother and sister, whom I have sought for everywhere, of whom, with all my skill and the entire detective force of New York at my command, I could obtain no trace. Ah! Mr. Lindsay, you are right. 'There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will.' And I see now that I am nothing more than an agent in the hands of Providence, and moving in certain lines without any skill of my own. Our good old chief would attribute all this to my great perceptive powers, while, in fact, I am as innocent of any credit in the matter as he is for the reorganization of the New York police force."

It was near three o'clock in the morning. The men had laid down on the floor in front of the fire, and, having dried their clothes, were dropping off to sleep.

Allan Dare's feelings were undergoing too great a tumult to allow him to close his eyes. He sat up smoking incessantly; and finally he went noiselessly to the front door to see how the weather was, and what prospect there was of getting away with his men. As he opened the door the wind came with a gust and blew the light out which he carried. He closed the door carefully behind

him, and, as he looked out seaward, he was struck with amazement, for the whole shore seemed aglow with bright lights.

A mile to the southward of the house there were two great lights seemingly hoisted on high poles, and nearly in front of the house, on the edge of the cliff overhanging the beach, was a bright light on a high pole, and two smaller lights on shorter poles.

Dare took in the situation in a moment. These lights were intended to represent the Sandy Hook and Navesink lights. Whoever ran for these false beacons with the intention of crossing the bar at Sandy Hook would land on the beach sixteen miles below, and find out his mistake only when too late. The lights had been put up after Dare and his men had gone into the house.

Although he hated to disturb his tired followers, there was no help for it, so he quietly aroused them from their slumbers, saying, "We have those fellows now. Their lights are all set, and they are waiting for some vessel to prey upon; go out, but make no noise."

Allan Dare selected one of Tormenteur's men, and left Belette, who had been brought in disabled, in charge, with orders not to leave the house under any circumstances until his return, and to defend the ladies with their lives. He then went off with the remainder of his force, now reduced to sixteen men.

Four men and an officer were sent south to lower the two large lanterns, while Allan Dare proceeded with the rest of his party to lower the ones representing the Sandy Hook lights. Signals were arranged in case the men going south should need assistance.

Allan proceeded with great caution, sending Chic ahead to reconnoiter. The latter soon returned with the news that there was a deep gully near the cliff, in which was a good-sized hut containing a number of men seated around a fire talking together.

"We will capture the whole of them," said Dare. "One of you lower the lights, while I lead against the pirates." In a few minutes Allan and his men reached the door of the hut. There were at least thirty men in it, but the fact did not deter him from doing his duty. He stood at the entrance of the cabin, the light reflected upon his stalwart form, saying, "I call upon you all to surrender to the law, and I have the force to carry out my commands."

The pirates were instantly on their feet—a set of rough-looking fellows, who did not look as if afraid of anything.

"Who in h—ll are you?" exclaimed one of them, leveling a

blow at Allan with a club. Allan caught the weapon in his hand, wrenched it from his assailant, and with one blow stretched him senseless on the floor. The others rushed upon Dare in a body, but they might as well have assailed an iceberg, for he tumbled them over like so many nine-pins, and struck so hard that when once down they did not rise again.

In the mean time, at a signal, a crowd of men came tumbling over into the gully from another hut not far distant.

Only four of Dare's men had succeeded in getting into the hut with him, and he had blocked up the entrance so completely that none could escape. With the short club in his left hand, and with his heavy right fist, Allan laid out every one that came within reach of his arm. At length one ruffian crawled along the wall of the hut, and, rising suddenly, struck at Dare's breast with a knife, but the knife rebounded, and the fellow, pallid with fright at the failure of his attempt, stood shivering before him. Allan seized him by the neck, and threw him to the ground with such force as to break his arm.

In the mean time the four powerful fellows belonging to Tormenteur's force laid about them so vigorously, and threatened to use their pistols, that the wreckers cried for quarter. Twelve of them lay senseless, or disabled, and eighteen surrendered. All who were not disabled were immediately put in irons.

During this time the outside party had been attacked by the wreckers from the other hut, and, although they made a stout resistance, were likely to be roughly handled. Fresh Barnegaters seemed to rush in from every quarter while the prisoners inside the hut were being secured.

"Follow me, all but Kent," shouted Dare, "and you keep guard at the door; shoot the first man that attempts to escape."

Allan did not know very well what was taking place outside, but took it for granted, as he heard no pistol-shots, that his men were holding their own. As he issued from the hut, however, he noticed that his men were contending against a superior force. His foot struck against an oar, and, picking it up, he rushed upon the enemy and brought the heavy piece of ash down among them with the force of a threshing-machine. The pirates were in strong force, and two of the police were already down.

"Use your pistols, men!" shouted Dare, as he fairly swept away the crowd with his oar. He seemed like a Brobdingnagian among the Lilliputians. The pistol-shots soon put the piratical

crowd to flight, just as the boom of a heavy gun came from seaward as if to announce the victory.

Dare gave orders to secure all the pirates that remained, and ten men were immediately put in irons, all of whom were more or less injured. Two of their companions lay dead on the ground, and those that survived were bundled into the hut with the other prisoners.

Another gun was heard from seaward, and then a third. "That is no sound of victory," said Dare, "but of death. These lights have decoyed some ship to destruction. We must go to work and save life if we can."

The first streak of day was now tingeing the eastern sky. The weather was still quite thick, but amid the storm came frequent flashes of guns. Then a blue-light was burned, and all the tracery of a large ship could be distinctly seen. Through the haze she looked like a phantom vessel running down the coast. When the blue-light burned out all seemed doubly dark, and the ship disappeared altogether.

Then were seen again the flashes of the guns, and the sound approached nearer the shore. Suddenly the ship was ablaze with light, as white signal-lights were burned all along the bulwarks, showing the hull and rigging almost as plainly as if it were daylight. Every rope and spar looked as if tinged with liquid fire.

While the lights were burning, Dare scanned the ship closely with his night-glass, and pronounced her to be an East India ship under bare poles, with the maintop-sail blown from the bolt-ropes, the boats all gone, and the hull drifting broadside toward the beach. Dare concluded that there was little hope for the ship or her crew, for ere the sun could rise she would be a wreck.

The ship, however, drifted slower than Dare expected, and, could she have set a fore and maintop-sail, might have been saved. But the maintop-sail was blown away, and the foretop-sail was furled and frozen so stiff that it was impossible to loosen it. The close-reefed foresail, half hauled up, was partly wrapped about the foreyard and jammed against the rigging, and therefore could not be set under any circumstances. The vessel could not have been in worse condition for clawing off a lee shore.

Allan Dare repaired to the hut where his prisoners were confined, and said, "Men, you have decoyed a ship on shore. Is there any boat hereabouts by which we can make an effort to save the crew?"

"Save the devil!" said one brute; "why, you might as well try to scull up Niagara Falls in an iron pot as face that sea in any boat hereabouts."

"There is a fine whale-boat in the third gully from here," said another man, "but it ain't sich fellers as you've got as can handle that boat. They're pretty good at clubs, that's a fact, but they'd make a flummux of it with oars in that sea-way. But I'll tell you what I'll do, Mister; I'll find six men as will go alongside that ere ship, half an hour after she strikes, and do their best to get the people on shore, if you'll let up on us when we get through."

"I agree to that," said Dare, "although in making such a contract I shall be taking undue authority upon myself; but a man that is willing to risk his own life to save that of another is worthy of consideration. I am glad to see there is some good in you yet."

"Lots of it," said the man, "'We will either make a spoon or spoil a horn,' you may depend on that."

"Pick your men, then," said Dare, "and I will release them. I think you have seen enough of me to know that I am not to be trifled with. If you attempt to escape I'll scour New Jersey till I find you."

"We don't want a second trial of your handiwork," said the man, "and we'll trust you if you'll trust us."

So the matter was arranged, and six men and a boat-steerer were released from confinement.

Just at this time the ship was in about six fathoms of water outside the breakers, when suddenly she came head to the wind and rode to the sea. A shout arose from the people on the beach: the ship had let go her starboard anchor.

"That won't last long," said the spokesman wrecker; "I've seen that tried afore. The heavy seas will come rolling in soon, and that chain will snap like a pipe-stem. Iron don't hold together in this weather like it do in summer—that's what my log-book says."

It was broad daylight now, and every movement on board the ship could be seen. There seemed to be forty or fifty people on board, who were running about in confusion. Presently the ship's bow began to fall off.

"There she goes," said the before-mentioned wrecker; "and that roller which parted her chain will bring her within half a mile of the beach, and the next one will land her."

It turned out exactly as the wrecker had predicted. The seas

broke over the vessel, and one tremendous roller seemed to pick her up and throw her half a mile in toward the shore. "God help them!" exclaimed Dare, "for no one else can."

"Yes, Mister," said the spokesman, "there's seven of us as will pick up some of them people, or bust our bilers. We'll go that fur for a trunk of bandanna handkerchers or a box of French brandy."

The ship drove rapidly in shore, and in a few minutes she struck the bottom, and all her upper masts came tumbling on deck. At the same time, the seas breaking over the ship, she disappeared almost from sight. In half an hour more she lay broadside on, had bilged, and was full of water.

With daylight the wind lulled, though the sea continued to roll heavily on the beach, but the crew had launched the whale-boat, saying it was better to start at once for the wreck, since every hour for the next twenty-four the rollers would likely be heavier, and the ship would soon break up.

Allan Dare threw off his coat and said, "I shall pull the stroke-oar; one of your men can remain behind this trip."

"*You* pull the stroke-oar!" said the steersman; "can you pull in a sea-way?"

"I can pull anywhere," said Dare; "what I don't know about an oar is not worth knowing."

"I'll bet you know how to use an oar one way," said the wrecker, "judging from what I saw you doing this morning; but it's your funeral. Take hold and stand by to launch the boat."

The boatmen all took hold of the whale-boat, which was well built, and with good beam, and had doubtless seen plenty of service in wrecking valuable cargoes.

The men gave way with a will, and the boat was soon outside the first breakers. "You'll do," said the boat-steerer to Dare. "Great Cæsar, what an arm you have! you could knock an elephant down. I wish I had that muscle. But let's see how you hold out. This is not river-water by a long shot."

A little later the steerer remarked, "You are worth four men. I have to steer against you all the time."

It was hard and slow work getting off to the wreck. The boatmen declared it was the heaviest sea they had ever encountered, and that the vessel would soon break up, especially if her cargo were light. At last, after pulling nearly two hours, they came under the lee of the ship's broadside.

"Stand by to throw a stout rope!" shouted Dare to those on board, "and belay it well."

He let his oar swing alongside by the becket, and said to the boat-steerer, "I'm going on board; you'll think before long that I can do something."

The rope was thrown, and Dare, catching the end of it, jumped overboard and went for the vessel hand over fist, and in a minute stood upon the deck, just as the ship, rising on a roller, came down on the bottom with a terrible thump, which seemed almost to tear her apart. At the same moment the foremast pitched over the side.

"No time to lose, good people!" exclaimed Dare; "but mind what I say. Pass on the women and children and the elderly people." He passed a selvagee-strap around each person, and, standing in the gangway, holding on with his left hand, he held the people out with his right hand over the boat, and, as she raised on the sea, he landed them safely in the bottom, until twelve women and children were deposited.

"Now, boys," he sang out, "land these people, and return. I'm going to make a raft."

"I'd go to the devil for such a man as you," said the steerer, "and we'll be back in a jiffy."

Dare watched the boat through the breakers, and saw her land her passengers and shove off again. "Now, my good people," he said, "let us go to work and make a raft. We don't know what may happen; the ship can not stand this thumping long."

So saying, Dare pitched the spars out of the long boat and began to haul the hen-coops to the gangway, and the crew, stimulated by his example, went to work with a will to assist him. The captain gave up charge of everything to Dare.

"Let us see," said Dare, "if we can't get the long boat out with the mainyard and the stay-tackles." All the gear was found in the bottom of the boat. Dare got up the tackles and secured the yards, so that nothing could give way, bracing the mainyard forward.

When everything was ready the tackles were well manned, and, by the exercise of a little practical seamanship, the boat was deposited safely in the water. Eight seamen jumped into her, and she was soon ready to start for the shore, carrying fifteen passengers, who were safely landed.

She was, however, too heavy a boat to return against such a sea, and was, therefore, hauled up on the beach.

Among the passengers was a gentleman of about sixty, tall and thin, with a white beard descending to his waist, and long white hair. He had evidently spent many years in the East Indies, for he was as dark as a mulatto, and his skin resembled parchment. His eye was as keen as a hawk's, and his teeth were white and even. He looked like a man that could bear any amount of fatigue, and he seemed particularly struck with the strength and courage of Allan Dare.

The old gentleman was the first to pull off his coat and roll up his sleeves. Every one noticed his muscular arms, which seemed disproportioned to the size of his body ; and he lifted weights that the strongest of the sailors could not manage alone.

When the long boat was ready to start for the shore Dare touched this gentleman on the shoulder and said, "Now's the time for you to try and get on shore ; your age entitles you to the privilege."

The wiry old man laughed. "My age, indeed," exclaimed he, "is an unknown quantity, but I doubt if any one in this ship can endure more than I can. I will stay by the ship to the last. There are plenty of people here who love life better than I do. I have tried to die fifty times in the last twenty years, and never could succeed. I have no one to regret me if I drown ; let some one else have my place. If need be I can, perhaps, swim ashore. You are young, and may have a mother anxiously awaiting you at home ; you had better save yourself before the ship breaks up. You have done your duty nobly, and are too young to die. I lost all worth living for before I was your age."

"I pity you, sir," said Dare ; "I am only just beginning to live. I never knew until to-day what the love of life was. I have been like the Wandering Jew for twenty years, and I have just saved the lives of my mother and sister, who do not even know me. They would both give all that they are worth to know I was here and safe, and I'd give all I am to be safe ashore with them ; and yet I shall not leave here until every one is out of the ship."

"You are an enigma," said the other. "I like your company, and will stay with you until the last ; but I can tell you that this vessel won't hold together an hour longer. She thumps harder every minute, and, by Heaven ! there goes the mizzenmast." In fact, the mizzenmast went by the board just as the wreckers returned alongside with the whale-boat. The boat was again filled with fifteen people, and succeeded in landing them safely.

By this time another whale-boat, which had been drawn along the beach on wheels, was launched, and with a stout crew on board was making slow headway for the wreck. There still remained sixteen persons on board to be taken off. The sea was increasing in violence, and, just before the last whale-boat reached the wreck, a heavy roller lifted the ship and the mainmast went by the board, breaking off close to the deck.

The crew now hurried into the boat as fast as possible, Dare handing them over the side. "There's only room for one more, and hardly that with safety," said the boat-steerer.

"Jump in, sir!" cried Dare to the old man.

"We'll wait for the next boat," said the wiry old man. "Shove off, my friend; tell them we'll come after dinner." And he went under the lee of a small cabin and lighted his pipe.

"Young man," said he to Allan, "this is comfort. When you are as old as I am you will learn to take the world easy, though for a youngster I think you do so pretty well."

Just then came a blast from seaward. "Ah!" exclaimed Dare, "it's going to pipe again—do you hear?"

"Let it pipe," said the other; "it won't affect me any."

"But it will me," said Dare; "and if you look shoreward you'll see something unpleasant. This last squall has driven the whale-boat back; we must swim for it."

"All right," said the old man; "but let us take this piece of raft with us, and some rope to tie ourselves on."

"No time is to be lost," said Dare. "Can you lift one end?"

"Can a duck swim?" said the old man, picking up his end of the raft as easily as Dare seemed to manage the other.

The raft was thrown over the side, and both men plunged in after it. At the same instant the ship, rising on a tremendous roller, came down again with such force on the hard bottom that she split open, emptying her cargo into the sea.

There was a loud shout from the shore, for the wreckers saw, as they supposed, a rich harvest floating right into their hands.

Dare and his companion clung to their raft and drifted rapidly toward the shore, but it required the exertion of all their strength to hold themselves on. They were accompanied by a large part of the cargo, which became a source of danger, barrels and boxes being thrown about by the sea with great force.

They had arrived within fifty yards of the beach, and those on shore were waiting to assist them to land, when a cask of wine was

thrown by the waves against Dare's companion, who slipped from the raft and disappeared.

Dare missed him instantly, and seeing a hand above water a few feet off, he sprang for it and caught the wiry old man by his long hair, just as he was sinking. In ten minutes more he laid him on the beach, apparently dead.

In the struggle with the elements for life Dare had his shirt-sleeves completely torn off, leaving his arms bare to the shoulder. But, without stopping to rest, he picked the old man up as if he had been a bag of feathers and started for the farm-house.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE LOST RESTORED.

AGNES and Mary, as soon as they heard that a half-drowned man was coming, prepared a room and had everything comfortable for him. Dare carried the old man to the dining-room and laid him down on a blanket before the great open fire. A doctor shortly arrived, and found his patient with a badly dislocated shoulder from his collision with the wine-cask, and a severe cut on the head.

The old man talked incoherently in some unknown language, and then fell asleep, which the doctor considered a bad sign, and directed that his patient should be at once put to bed.

Dare had left his coat on the beach, and when he started for the house with his burden he took no heed of the weather. He was dripping wet, and could not well be more so, but he was so interested in his wiry old friend, who had so fearlessly shared the dangers of the wreck with him, that he took no heed of his own comfort or appearance.

He did not present the style a gentleman is supposed to maintain before ladies, but for want of other clothes he was forced to appear in what he had on.

What with men coming into the dining-room to warm themselves, and preparing quarters for the sick up-stairs, Agnes's house had assumed very much the appearance of a barrack. Agnes was not one of those who could take the lead on an occasion of this kind. She was of a timid, shrinking disposition, and had always led a secluded life. All this tramping about the house frightened

her, and she remained in the parlor, leaving Dare to superintend everything. She had been made extremely nervous that morning, on attempting to open the lower window-shutters, to find they had all been fastened together on the outside by a short clamp screwed into them, evidently with the intention to cut off the inmates of the house from escape when the fire got well under way. The oak door leading into the kitchen was secured in the same way, so that the only chance of escape left those two helpless women would have been by the upper bedroom windows.

It was plain enough to Agnes that a bitter enemy was following her—probably the same one that had for years been seeking her life. It pained her to think that she had given any cause for hatred. She was all alone in the world, and did not even know the name of the place she then inhabited. Mr. Morton, when he hired the farm-house, had informed the owner that the lady who would be placed there was of unsound mind and under the care of a young woman, that she was sometimes violent and would endeavor to escape, and he forbade any one holding communication with the house. The cook had been brought there the day after Agnes and her daughter arrived, and was ordered to permit no one to communicate with the house, on pain of losing her place and double wages. She had been duly impressed with the idea that the lady was not exactly in her right mind, and Agnes's rather weird appearance confirmed what had been told her.

The agent, whoever he was, every evening laid down at the kitchen-door what was required for the following day ; but no one ever saw him. For miles around it was understood that an insane woman was confined in Mr. Holmes's farm-house, that her friends desired that no communication should be had with her, and consequently the place was avoided.

Days and weeks had thus passed without Agnes and Mary seeing a soul except the cook, who was rather a kind-hearted person, but zealous to prevent her lady from escaping, believing it better for her to remain where she was, and anxious for her own part to continue in a place where she received extra wages.

Mary had not seen Mr. Morton since the day he called upon her in John Street, nor had she been able to see the agent who left what was wanted for the house. She supposed Mr. Morton had good reasons for all this secrecy, but it did not impress her pleasantly.

Winter had come in like a lion, and the ground was generally

covered with snow and ice. The only amusement Mary and her mother had was to sit at the front windows and watch the ocean, and the vessels sailing along the coast. They did not dare to walk out, for the cook had so filled their heads with stories of the Barne-gat pirates that the very thought of meeting any of these desperadoes made their blood run cold.

Such was the condition of affairs when Allan Dare came in the nick of time to save them from a horrible death.

Agnes now looked up to this stranger with stalwart form for comfort and protection. She felt the deepest gratitude to him for what he had done. Her house and all its contents were at his disposal, and she only regretted that she could not bustle about in a sick-chamber and make herself more useful. In such matters Agnes and her daughter were quite helpless, and shrank from coming in contact with strangers. They were completely unstrung, and required to be taken care of themselves.

They missed the companionship of the cook, who had so mysteriously disappeared. She would have been a comfort to them among so many rough men, and would have been most useful in the sick man's chamber. They could not imagine what had become of her, and Agnes determined that she would consult Allan Dare as soon as his duties would allow him to attend to what she wished to say.

Agnes and Mary were sitting in the parlor, hand in hand, terribly shaken by the events of the past night, when there came a knock at the door. It was Allan Dare who knocked. What a relief it was to see his face! "Oh!" exclaimed Agnes, "I am so glad to see you; I felt so lonely and frightened!"

"I hope," said Allan, "that you will excuse my personal appearance. In times like these one can not be as particular as he would like. What clothing I have left does not make me very presentable, and it is impossible to borrow any, so I must ask you to receive me as I am."

While Allan Dare was speaking, Mary regarded him keenly. She had heard the voice before. It sounded like that of Vere Saye, and the form was like his; but the red beard and hair were certainly not Vere Saye's. What would she not give at this moment if that noble man, who called her his little sister and told her to call on him if ever she got into trouble, were there!

Dare turned toward the light, and his right arm was bare to the shoulder. It was an arm that a sculptor would have loved to model, and one that a woman could lean on with a certainty of

protection. Agnes gazed upon his noble form, and then her eyes became fixed on a mark just above the elbow. It was like the marks on her lost children's arms. A crowd of painful memories rushed across her mind. She seemed dazed while looking at what she had longed for so many years to see.

Dare stood quietly wondering whether there was such a thing as maternal instinct, and whether Agnes would remember and notice the mark on his arm.

Agnes went timidly to his side and put her finger on the figure of the little mouse, and, looking up wistfully in his face, asked, "What is your name?" She waited breathless for him to speak, while Mary, with hands clasped and parted lips, awaited his answer.

Dare smiled upon his mother with a smile of the purest happiness. What a beautiful picture those two persons, standing in that expectant attitude, presented! They looked as if on his answer depended the happiness of their lives.

At last he spoke, while tears stood in his eyes. "My name is Allan Dare."

Agnes's hand dropped to her side and her head fell upon her bosom. "Ah, no!" she sighed, "it will never be. It is like the false lights hung out on the coast to lure ships to their destruction. I only wreck my hopes by following such delusions. Oh, it will never be!" and tears trickled down her cheeks.

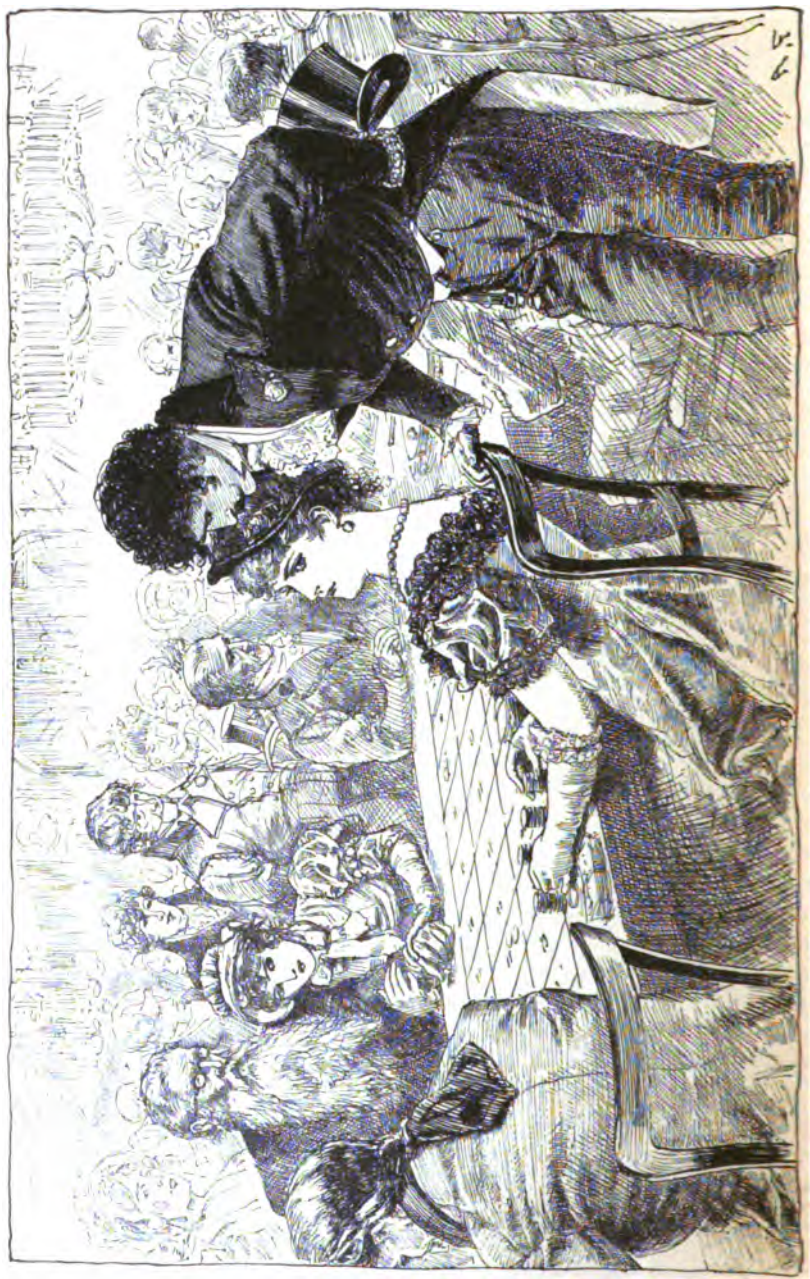
"Yes," Allan said, "my name to the world is Allan Dare, but, my own sweet mother," taking Agnes by the hand, "I am your son Charles, who has returned to you and will never leave you again."

Agnes gazed at him for a moment in silence. "At last!" she exclaimed, and fell fainting in his arms. He laid his mother tenderly on the sofa, and, turning to Mary, said, "My sweet sister, you are not such a stranger to me as you think," and, taking off his beard and wig, Vere Saye stood before her. Mary's joy was too deep for utterance.

"I loved you as a sister when we were at Hawks' Roost," he said, "and I have thought constantly of you since. Ten days after we parted I learned that you were my sister, and have been searching for you ever since. A kind Providence directed my footsteps here, and I arrived just in time to save you from a horrible death."

Taking Mary in his arms, he kissed her fondly with a brother's affection.

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She whispered to Conti, "I can not win while that man, my mortal enemy, remains here."

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Happiness seldom kills, and Agnes soon revived from her swoon to learn that what she had recently passed through was not a dream, but a happy reality. When she came to herself her lost one was holding one hand, and Mary the other. She struggled to release herself, and, throwing her arms around her son's neck, held him as if she would never again lose sight of him.

Her happiness had come at last ; she had gone through life sustained by the hope that God would return to her part if not all of her worldly treasures.

She could not expect that the sea would give up its dead, but she felt that God would one day return to her those little wanderers who had been so mysteriously snatched away from her. Agnes saw in all that happened the hand of that Providence on which she had ever relied, and felt that she was blessed beyond all other women.

When they had settled down calmly to realize all their happiness, Agnes on one side of her son and Mary on the other, with one of his hands in each of theirs, Agnes said, "Charles, what a great, big boy you've grown ! Tell me, shall I see your brother James ?" and she waited anxiously for an answer.

"He will come before long," said Charles ; "he is absent now. You will see him in good time. Be patient, dear mother. He who has brought us together after so many trials will not do His work by halves. Mary has seen our brother, that handsome Deville who was with us at Hawks' Roost."

"Thank God for all his mercies, mother. A noble man he is ; it was he that gave me the annuity and called me his little sister. I loved him and Charles then like brothers."

"Now," said Dare, as we will for the present continue to call him, "I have duties to perform. I have appointed one of my men, and little Chic, whom you will remember, Mary, to attend the sick man, and I must go to the beach." So, kissing them both affectionately, he departed.

Agnes was loath to let him leave her side. She was afraid she should never see her son again, and that it would all turn out to be a dream ; but at length she quieted down, and spent the morning talking over the happy event with Mary.

When Dare reached the beach he found a large number of men gathering in the cargo of the wrecked vessel, which, under care of the captain, was being piled up on shore.

Only a small part of the vessel remained, and the heavy sea roll-

ing in would destroy it all ere night, but a large portion of the cargo would be saved.

Dare sent for the six men that had volunteered for service in the whale-boat, and said to them, "Men who have so nobly periled their lives to save the lives of others can not be really bad, and deserve reward. At the same time, if those false lights had not been exhibited, the vessel would probably have been guided into New York by the Sandy Hook lights, or would have hauled off shore."

The foreman laughed. "Not a bit of it, Mister," he said. "You couldn't see them taller dips more nor a mile such a night as the last one, even if they had been burning. The only difference is, the ship would have struck on Sandy Hook, where there isn't a sailor to pull a boat, and every soul would most likely have been lost. As it is, we saved 'em all, except the old gentleman who saved himself with your assistance. It was a special Providence, sir, that the ship struck where she did."

This last remark rather impressed Dare, who had seen so much of special providences lately. "Well," he said, "you are all free to go where you like. Take my advice and have nothing more to do with the business of decoying vessels. Confine yourselves to a legitimate wrecking business. Your salvage will pay you well, and you will run no risk of the penitentiary. I am sorry," he continued, "that I have to take your comrades away with me to New York. I think after their experience they will not want to go into the decoying and pilfering business again."

"Not while you pulls stroke-oar," said the steerer, "for you made lots of sore heads last night. What a splendid beach-comber you'd a made!" And with this compliment the men returned to their work of saving cargo.

Carts were procured and the prisoners conveyed to the sloop, while Dare returned to the house to enjoy the company of his mother and sister.

A courier was sent across the country to inform the underwriters of the loss of the ship *Fame*, from Calcutta, *via* the Cape of Good Hope; and the proper agents arrived in due time to take charge of the property. For the first time in a long period not an article was stolen. Passengers and crew were well lodged in the farm-houses, and all the baggage that came on shore reached the rightful owners.

Dare found his mother and Mary waiting to receive him, and each took him by the hand and led him into the little parlor like

two children that had found a pet dog, and were never tired of caressing it. Mary showed him her picture of "Disappointment," on which she had been working ever since she came to the New Jersey shore. Her brother had seen the companion-picture of "Hope" at Hawks' Roost, and greatly admired it.

The picture was not quite finished, but sufficiently so to show its merits. It represented the same ship that appeared in the picture of "Hope." There the vessel was represented as going into port with every stitch of sail set, the captain so anxious to save time that he would not reduce sail to take a pilot on board. The pilot-boat, under press of sail, was represented as under the ship's quarter launching a small boat, while a sailor from the ship was throwing a line to the schooner to haul the boat alongside.

In the first picture was the representation of an old man with a long white beard and hair. He stood shading his eyes with an East India hat which he held in his hand, looking at the distant light-houses of Navesink, while the passengers gathered around him as if listening to what he was saying.

In the picture of "Disappointment" the ship was represented as in the breakers, all the masts gone except the mizzenmast. The people on board were trying to launch a boat over the gunwale, while the old man stood calmly by, surveying the scene before him as if he took no particular interest in anything, but was awaiting his fate. Several life-boats were in the foreground trying to make their way to the ship against the heavy seas that were breaking over her.

Mary had sketched the coast as it appeared from her window, and the whole picture seemed to be intended as the representation of the loss of the *Fame*.

"That, Mary," said her brother, pointing to the picture of the wiry old man, "is my Indian nabob. I dare say his trunks, when they come ashore, will be filled with diamonds and rubies. Poor old fellow! he told me on the wreck that life was no object to him; that all those he loved were long since dead; that he was merely waiting the summons to join them. Yet he is the most cheerful old fellow I ever met with, and I hope he will yet find something to live for."

Just then there came a knock on the door, and on going out Dare found a packing-case about three feet long, made of goat-skin, laced up on top, with a flap to cover the lacing. The case was marked, in large black letters, "Mungo Park," and one of the

crew stated that this was the only baggage the wiry old gentleman possessed.

Dare took the trunk into the house, saying to Mary as he passed the parlor-door, "The old nabob turns out to be simply a philosopher, and this contains all his worldly goods." So saying, he carried the case up to the old gentleman's room. The latter was just taking a cup of tea as Dare entered, and his eyes sparkled with pleasure. "Ah, my boy!" he said, "why didn't you leave me out there to end my days? It would have been a fit conclusion of such a life as mine. Who is it that says 'Life is as tedious as a twice-told tale vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man'? What was the use of saving such a worn-out hulk as I am? A wet blanket is useful at a fire or in a fever, but no one wants it hanging about the chairs and tables at a merry party. I am nothing more than a mourner at other people's funerals. I have no griefs of my own; all are buried in the graves of those I once loved. Do you know what I thought when that barrel struck me? 'Thank God!' I said to myself, 'it didn't strike that young fellow.' For twenty years I have railed unceasingly against fate. Fortunately my hearers did not understand me, or they would have sneered at my frog-opera. What can a man like myself do but stand in the sunshine of every one else? I have grumbled at my misfortunes until tired of hearing myself talk. Unlike the bee, I find gall in every bright object. The greatest sufferers are sometimes the sunniest, but my wounds are too deep for tears.

"I once enjoyed life, and, like the man who put on magnifying glasses to eat cherries, I wanted everything to be *couleur de rose*. Did you ever hear of the bagpiper who was always wailing of sorrow and death until he had his mouth sewed up and could not blow? I am like that piper. Who wants such a cloud as I walking about on two legs? The world wants sunshine; the gloomiest landscape becomes beautiful under the bright rays of the sun. I am an old foggy, always croaking, and ought to be in company with people as miserable as myself—that is, in the grave, in fellowship with the worms."

"My dear sir," said Dare, "I am glad to find you so chatty, and, after a good night's rest, you will feel like a new man. In two days you will look upon everything in a different light."

"The doctor tells me I am here for two weeks with a fractured shoulder-blade, and what right have I to tax any one that long when I have nothing with which to pay for a dinner?"

"Dinners are plenty here, and not expensive," said Dare, "and my mother and sister will be only too happy to give you dinners for the pleasure of your company when you get better. You will see what sunshine is here, and I am sure you will not run away from it and hide yourself under a cloud."

"As this is your mother's house," said the old man, "I shall—I don't exactly know why—feel under less obligation and restraint. You and I have faced death together, and nothing makes people more clannish than that. I can repay your mother in some degree by singing your praises. I am not so cynical as to refuse to acknowledge the obligations of life."

"I brought up a goat-skin bag, which I believe is yours," said Dare. "Is there anything of yours missing besides?"

"You are entitled to know who I am," said the old man. "Everything belonging to me is marked with my name. I am Mungo Park, the famous African traveler. I have been a slave, and rose to the dignity of chief physician to King Gumbo Chaff, and commander-in-chief of the army and navy. Finally the office of prime minister was forced upon me, and, when the King died, I was made king in his place. I have hobnobbed with the highest potentates of Central Africa, and have dined with fifty kings at one time.

"On one occasion, ever to be remembered, those great monarchs met to honor an old philosopher who had served each of them in turn as prime minister. They wanted to show him the highest honors ever shown to living men. He was ninety-eight years old, and getting feeble. The kings met together, cooked the venerable man and ate him, leaving not a scrap except the bones, and these the kings wore afterward through their noses as a token of respect to the memory of the departed. Ah, sir! that's the country to live in if a man wants to be honored; very different from what I have heard of the doings in this benighted land, where politicians get up on the floor of Congress and denounce old officers of the army and navy as bummers, inhumanly reducing their families to beggary because those officers have grown too old and infirm for further service, while the *real* bummers are fattening at the public crib. In that blessed land of Africa there are no newspapers, and if a man were to set up as an editor they would skin him alive and roast him before a slow fire. It is death to malign an old African that has fought for his country, and when he dies all his relations are killed and eaten in honor of his memory."

"A pleasant country to live in indeed!" interrupted Dare.

"Pleasant!" said the wiry old man; "that word doesn't express it; it's simply heavenly. There are some things which take a little time for one to get used to. You would feel a little squeamish at first at seeing a little nigger snatched up and put on a toasting-fork before a good fire, and then eaten without pepper or salt. Little niggers are plenty as blackberries, and perhaps better for eating; but those enlightened African monarchs are never ungrateful to those who have risked their lives in the public service. They never reduce their pay, or take away their honors while living, and, as I told you before, they pay them the highest of compliments at the last by eating them.

"The people over there have the best government on the face of the earth; they have no aldermen, no politicians, no lawyers, no preachers, no courts of justice, no strong-minded women. Everything runs like clock-work. There are no extortioners, no vile hotels where you are cheated out of your money. With a bag of cowries you can travel from one end of the country to the other, and your property is sacred. It is true the people have very little to lose, but their breech-clouts are as valuable to them as your gold watch is to you. They have no pickpockets, because there are no pockets to pick. I can assure you, sir, there is no country to live in like Central Africa."

"I am afraid," said Dare, "that you are exciting yourself too much. In a few days you shall tell me all about your travels in Africa, but now you should sleep all you can, so as not to bring on a fever."

"I fear I am getting garrulous," said the old man, "and you must tell me when I talk too much; but I am going back to Africa again as soon as I pay the last honors to my dead. I am a stranger here. No man knows me, and I know no one. You are the only being to whom I have ever opened my heart. I don't know why it is, but something draws me toward you. I presume it is because we have faced death together. I have but one object in life, as I said before; that fulfilled, I shall return to Africa and receive the last honors—that is, be eaten in my old age at a feast of kings. Now I will try and go to sleep."

When Dare rejoined his mother he amused her with an account of the eccentric old gentleman up-stairs, whom he thought would interest her when he got well; but Agnes soon recurred to the non-appearance of her servant-woman, about whom she was very anxious.

Dare had been so busy that he had had little time to think of the missing cook, but he now called two of his men and directed them to make a careful search among the ruins of the kitchen. Their investigation was at length rewarded by finding the partially consumed body of the unfortunate woman, with a deep indentation in the skull as if made by an iron bar, and near the building lay an iron instrument, still clotted with blood and hair.

Dare was horrified at this new discovery, which he was compelled to disclose to his mother and Mary, notwithstanding the shock it would give them. He ordered a watch set over the body, and sent at once for the coroner.

"The infernal murderer!" he said; "and so he would have treated my mother and sister. But, thank God! his end is near; he can never harm them more." Then he communicated to his mother the news of the cook's death, omitting all reference to the murder.

In the course of the afternoon Tormenteur and his companion, who had gone to arrest the captain of the *Little Joke*, returned with the report that they had seen nothing of the vessel, although they had searched up and down the river. It was thought likely that the steamer had gone down the river the night before, and, not being able to cross the bar, had taken the old inlet channel between Navesink and Sandy Hook, and would watch for the gale to abate to enable her to get up to New York.

Tormenteur was sent with dispatches to the chief of police, with orders to drop down in the sloop early next morning with his prisoners, and proceed through Old Inlet to New York, and if he came across the *Little Joke*, he was to arrest all on board. Nothing, however, was seen of the *Little Joke*, although the sloop encountered weather such as the steamer could not get along in.

That night the coroner held his inquest by candle-light over the remains of the poor cook, and the verdict of the jury was death by the accidental burning of a can of turpentine.

When the iron bar with the blood and hair adhering was pointed out to the coroner, that worthy said: "It's all bosh; people don't do them kind of things in Jersey, and I aint a goin' to ruin the reputation of a respectable house for any New York notions." The truth was, the coroner was a cousin to Holmes, the owner of the house—hence the verdict.

Allan Dare, however, carefully preserved the iron bar for future use, determined to leave no stone unturned to convict Morton of

the crime that had been, no doubt, perpetrated, although he had at present not a particle of evidence against him. For all Dare's detective ability, Morton could at present sit cool and smiling in his bank and defy him. Not a man in New York would believe Dare if he spoke ill of its eminent citizen. It was necessary for Dare to await something more tangible in the shape of evidence, but he felt satisfied that finally he would run the fox to his hole.

At present all the evidence he possessed was a sleeve-button found among the ruins of Gale House, the letters of Charles Gale, and the portmanteau with the tin can.

When Dare studied the matter carefully he said to himself : " This man may beat me yet, though he will never again be able to harm those I love, for I shall never leave them until he is out of the way."

Now that Dare no longer hesitated to believe in the doctrine of a special Providence, he felt satisfied that ultimately Mr. Morton would be brought to justice. He must, more than ever before, invoke the aid of Chic, for all he knew of Morton became known to him through that very clever urchin.

Chic was the first one to bring Deville under Dare's notice ; Chic had brought Jacob Moses to justice ; Chic obtained the portmanteau which might in the end be most important ; Chic obtained the letters exposing Louise ; in fact, he had put Dare in possession of many facts too numerous to mention.

That evening a happy trio assembled around the tea-table, and Dare told his mother and sister many of the events of his life. His mother and sister had been busy during the afternoon in preparing a room for Allan's accommodation ; and it was curious to watch those two happy beings as they went about their work so joyously. It would seem to a stranger that life had been but a bed of roses to them. They ransacked the house to adorn the room ; the best sheets, the softest blankets, and the finest counterpane were put upon the bed, and a pretty set of muslin curtains were hung at the windows.

When Mary and her mother had finished adjusting the room, they surveyed their work with much satisfaction and went downstairs to prepare the tea-table. Dare had sent one of his men to hire a young woman for general housework, and everything was now going on like clock-work.

After tea Dare said, " I am going to show you, dear mother and sister, something that will please you," and going to his room he

took a bundle from a portmanteau, and, returning, laid it before Agnes.

"Open it, dear mother," he said, "and look at your handiwork of twenty-two years ago. I have never had these clothes away from me during all that time, for I hoped through them to find my parents."

Agnes opened the bundle and gazed for some moments on its contents. Then a flood of recollections overpowered her, and, laying her head upon the table, she burst into tears; but they were tears of joy, now that she had one of her lost children back again, and would eventually embrace the other.

"See," she said, her eyes swimming in tears, "the initials I worked on your clothing the day before you were stolen away; and this cap, with a 'J' worked upon it, is dear little James's; and here is Mary's handkerchief; I bought it from a peddler and marked it with her name. Everything comes back to my recollection. O God! I am thankful for your mercies, and though I have longed for my children, I have never ceased to believe that in your own good time you would return them to me."

When the time came to part for the night Agnes could hardly tear herself away from her son, who embraced his mother and sister affectionately and retired to his own room, stopping on the way to bid his friend from Central Africa good-night.

The wiry old gentleman was sipping a cup of tea very cheerfully, and Allan said to him, "Mr. Park, you don't look much like a dead man; you seem as happy as any of us."

"Ah!" exclaimed the traveler, "that's a delusion. I always *look* happy, for that is an African custom I have adopted; but my happiness is only skin deep. However, you mustn't call me Mr. Park. I am simply Mungo Park and nothing else. I used to call the king of Ashante Tom Tom simply, and I am known all over Africa as Mungo Park. If ever you go to Africa, Dare, they will make you a king right off. They have men of fine physique, but none like yours. I fancy you could manage ten kings in that country. Tom Tom made me his prime minister because I threw him heels over head in a wrestling-match. I knocked three kings over at one time in a boxing-match. They had no science at all, and I could have thrashed half a dozen of them, but didn't want them to think me too powerful, as they might have honored and eaten me before my time."

Dare laughed heartily. "Now, my dear sir," he said, "I insist

on your going to sleep, and shall be discourteous enough to blow out your light."

Then, having previously directed the men to keep watch by turns during the night in case anything unusual should occur, Allan went to bed, to dream over the happy events of the day.

CHAPTER LIV.

PREPARATIONS.

A WEEK of supreme happiness had passed in the Holmes farmhouse. It seemed to Dare that he had never known any other kind of existence, and he could hardly realize that any mortal could experience so much joy on earth. All he wanted was dear little Flossy to complete his satisfaction ; but he hoped soon to have her with him, never more to be separated.

Each day seemed, if possible, to endear more and more his mother and sister to him. As to Agnes, she seemed to worship the ground upon which her son trod, and she and Mary were never tired of sitting by his side and hearing him recount his numerous adventures.

One day Mary said to him, "Brother, what has become of that bewitching little Miss Carrolton I met at Hawks' Roost? I really loved her. How I should like to have a sister like that ; we would be so happy together !"

"Perhaps," said Allan, "you will have her for a sister some of these days. I intend to do everything in my power to make you happy."

Mary looked at her brother in astonishment. "Do you really mean it?" she said. "I never noticed that you were particularly attentive to Miss Carrolton."

"You were so busy learning seamanship from Lieutenant Harry Morton you could not see what was going on elsewhere. You must have learned a good deal of hawks' language under the old oak."

Mary blushed so deeply that her mother noticed her confusion. "Why, Mary dear," she said, "what is the matter? Your cheeks look as if they were painted !"

Allan laughed heartily. "Ah ! my little sister," he whispered,

"I am afraid you are a cunning little thing, but you need not be ashamed of it. Harry is a splendid fellow."

Mary kept her eyes fixed on her work, and said no more. But innocent Agnes, who had seen so little of the world, and thought her own love affair the only one that had ever taken place, could not account for so much blushing. "Charles," she said, "tell me what all this means; what has my pet been doing to make her blush so?"

"Doing what you did before her, dear mother," replied Allan; "but Mary will tell you herself when she is ready."

Mary slipped out of the room and ran up-stairs, while Allan began telling his mother all about the beautiful girl whom he loved and was going to marry.

A tear trickled down Agnes's face as she listened. "Ah, dear!" she said, "I am so selfish that I desire all your love for myself, for a short time at least; but I shall love whomever you do, and we will all live together, will we not?"

"Yes, mother, where I live you shall live while life is left you. We will never part again after we once get settled in our own home."

Agnes kissed her son, and then went to find Mary.

Dare had stayed away longer from New York than he had intended. It was now seven days since the sloop had been sent to the city with the prisoners, and she had returned to Shrewsbury River two days ago.

Dare's friend from Africa was now able to dress himself, and was entirely free from pain. He was always ready for a talk when Allan went into his room.

"Well, my boy," said he, on this occasion, "I am getting along swimmingly, and must take leave of you in a day or two. My dead are calling me to visit their graves, and then I am off again to Africa. If I were in Africa now, the doctors would have cured me in twenty-four hours. When a man has a limb broken in that country they put him in a hot oven until the bone knits. If he is a good, able-bodied man, he pulls through. Most of them die, but then they are cured of everything in that case. That's the way I look at it."

"Ah, sir!" said Dare, "when you care more about life it will seem different to you. This habit of looking on the dark side of things will disappear as you mix with cheerful people. There's my dear mother, whose heart has been wrung with sorrow. Her woes have been too deep for tears, but she has borne her load patiently

and in silence, and, for the sake of others, is the sunniest creature I ever met."

"Does she visit the graves of her dead loved ones?" inquired Mungo Park.

"The one she loved best," replied Dare, "lies at the bottom of the ocean, and she lives in the hope of meeting him in a better world."

"She has something left to live for," he replied; "I have nothing that I know of. Your life here is too luxurious for me; I am not used to it. I could stand the hard-tack and musty pork on shipboard, but chicken-soup is demoralizing. I sigh for my African fare—asses' milk and grasshoppers. That's a dish to set before a king—an African king, of course—for they are the only kings that understand the true philosophy of living."

Dare laughed at the old man's conceit, and then bade him goodbye for a few days, telling him that he left him in charge of his sister. "Look out," said Dare, "you don't fall in love with her; she's a beauty!"

"Ah, my young friend!" said Mungo Park, "I have no room in my old heart for any one. It is filled with the image of her whom I loved better than I did my God. That is the reason he parted us, and that is why I am sorry you did not let me drown."

Dare pressed the old man's hand and left the room, deeply touched with his sorrows.

Early next morning Allan bade his mother and sister farewell and set out with Chic for the sloop, which was waiting for him with sails up. In ten minutes she was off before the wind with a spanking breeze, heading down the river. In four hours Allan Dare was in his own quarters in the city of New York, in consultation with Tormenteur.

"Have you the prisoner Carrolton safe?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir," answered Tormenteur; "safe and well cared for in the room occupied by Jacob Moses."

"Jacob was the better man of the two," said Dare, "but give me the key."

When Dare entered the prisoner's room Brice was sitting in an easy-chair in his shirt-sleeves, with a pair of slippers incasing his huge feet. A pipe was in his mouth, and on the table stood a bottle of brandy.

"This is nice treatment for a gentleman," said Brice; "ten

days in prison, and nobody to talk to. The fellow you left as my jailer is deaf as a post and dumb as an oyster !”

“Perhaps you would prefer being sent to the common jail, where the jailer can both hear and speak !”

“You really don’t mean it,” said Brice, in alarm.

“Yes, I do,” said Dare, “unless you comply at once with my terms. After that I will see what arrangements can be made.”

“I can’t help myself,” said Brice, “so say your say.”

“As I am going to marry your niece,” said Dare, “I want to avoid soiling her name, which I could not help doing if you were brought into court. The fact that you were associated with Robert le Diable in business would convince people that you were associated with him in crime, and you might go to the penitentiary. Even if you were acquitted in the courts, Judge Lynch might take the matter in hand, and you know the Americans are apt to lose their heads when they think themselves wronged and can’t get justice.”

“My God ! you don’t mean to say they would string me up to a lamp-post ?”

“That’s exactly what I mean.”

“Then state your terms fully,” said Brice. “I don’t suppose you have a particle of consideration for me, but you wouldn’t see Flossy shed a tear. Poor little girl ! I haven’t done my duty by her, but I’m sure she wouldn’t like to see her old uncle hanged to a lamp-post. I have certificates of stock in her name of thirty thousand pounds in the three per cents, and I have property in England worth eight thousand pounds, which I will make over to her, and give her five thousand dollars as a wedding-present. Here is the key of my desk in Chambers Street. You will find all the certificates there. I will give you a check on Morton’s bank for five thousand dollars. There is a year’s interest due on the three per cents, so that there will be altogether a neat little sum coming to Flossy. Will that do ?”

“Yes,” answered Dare, “although it’s nothing more than what Flossy is entitled to.”

“Then let us finish up the business, for I want to get out of this cursed hole !”

“Why, Jacob Moses, the great burglar, stayed here a month, and it was as much as we could do to get him to leave the premises. It is true he was struck through the heart with a dagger a few minutes after he left, the anticipation of which may have had something to do with his desire to remain here.”

"State your terms," said Brice, shuddering, "and I will comply with them."

"My terms are," said Dare, "that you never again come near or attempt to hold any intercourse with your niece; that you will never mention your relationship to her; that you will remove at least four hundred miles from the city of New York, and not return here without my consent."

"These are hard conditions," said Brice, "but I accept them."

"Then sign this paper, and the check for five thousand dollars, while I go after the certificates, and have a proper deed made out for your signature." So saying, Dare locked the door, and left Brice to his reflections.

He next secured the certificates and the schedule of Brice's property, and, after sprucing himself up, repaired to Mrs. Eton's and spent the evening with Flossy.

He did not tell Flossy of his finding his mother and sister, or of his good luck in securing the property in Brice's hands; he kept all this news for another time.

That night when Allan arrived home he sent for Chic and said, "Watch when Mr. Morton is in his bank to-morrow morning, then go to his house and find out if this is his portmanteau. I leave it to you how to do it; but make no mistake."

"No, sir," replied Chic.

The next morning Dare rose early, and, dressing himself in the character of the Rev. Mr. Raymond, went to call on the chief of police, whom he found busy in his office.

"I was afraid your reverence had joined the Barnegat pirates," said the chief. "Where have you been all this time? A nice kettle of fish have you made. Instead of twenty-eight prisoners mentioned in your dispatch, you sent me twenty-eight cripples, who are now in the hospital. I called to see the poor devils, and it was pitiable to look at them. They told how, after thrashing the life out of them with an oar, you picked out the only ones who got off cheap and made them pull you off to a wreck, where you saved the lives of fifty people; then you stayed behind with an old crazy fellow, and, after the ship broke up, swam ashore with him on your back. They said they'd rather take a thrashing from you than any other man they ever met with. If you'll go into the Barnegat district and run for Congress, you'll be elected without any trouble."

"Thank you," rejoined Dare.

"The Governor of New Jersey," said the chief, "is tickled to

death with your exploits. He expects a re-election on the strength of it—that is, if the Jersey men don't take you up."

Dare now related all his adventures, his finding his mother and sister, and how near he came to losing them by the fire. He told him of the search he had had for them, how for years Morton had tried to take their lives, and that Morton was the man to whom he alluded when he spoke of exposing "the leading man in New York."

"You have lots of circumstantial evidence, Dare," said the chief, "but nothing that will condemn a man like Morton before a jury. He could prove a dozen alibis and get the better of you. Lay your lines out carefully and you'll secure him ultimately. I never liked that man, anyhow; but, Jerusalem! won't there be a row when you do get him?"

"Now," said Dare, "I want ten days' leave of absence to attend to matters of my own." And then he related to the chief all about his affair with Brice, and how he was going to marry Flossy.

"But, your reverence," said the chief, "is not this a case of compounding a felony, and, if it is, why should not I arrest you on the spot?"

"Because," said Dare, "I have a commission from the Governor of New Jersey; in the second place, Brice is not guilty of violating the law in this country—I only played a ruse on him; in the third place," he said, laughing, "I'll prove an alibi."

"I believe you could prove anything you tried to," said the chief, good-humoredly. "Now go and attend to your business. The next time I see you I shouldn't be surprised if you told me you had found your father."

"Ah, sir!" exclaimed Dare, "some things are without the limits of possibility. Good-day, and if I am wanted particularly send for me."

Dare found Chic awaiting him at his quarters, and asked him if he had succeeded.

"That depends, sir," said Chic. "I saw Mr. Morton sitting in his office looking rather pale, and when he rose from his chair to walk across the room he limped a little. 'That's my man,' says I; 'I can put my finger on the spot where my whittler touched him.' Then I went to Mr. Morton's house and knocked. A fellow came to the door looking as much like Morton as one pea looks like another; he wears the same kind of side-whiskers and the same kind of clothes. Says I to him, 'Here's your master's portmanteau.' 'I haven't got any master, Mr. Toad Fish,' says he. 'What are you

doing with that portmanteau, anyhow? I've been looking for it these ten days; I generally uses it when I goes home Saturday nights.'

"'Yes,' says I, 'to take home cold victuals in.'

"'Shut up your soup-hatch,' says he. 'What do you know of such things, anyhow? Wait until you are head doorkeeper; we'll see what you'll do then.'

"'Well,' says I, 'what did you take home last in this tin can? We make portmanteaus in our shop, but we don't make kitchen-tins.'

"'Who says you did?' says he. 'I brought that tin home full of turpentine about two weeks ago, but I don't know what the old man wanted it for.'

"'To kill moths with, of course,' says I; 'it's the best thing in the world for that, but I'd like to know what the portmanteau was left at our store for, with no message as to what was to be done to it.'

"'Let me see,' says the man. 'Oh! to put a new lining in. I want it next Saturday evening; now be off.'

"'You won't mention our neglect?' says I, 'because, if your old man finds out we didn't attend to the job, he'll take away his custom.'

"'No, I won't say a word about it, for he might be asking ugly questions as to how the lining got injured. Now cut off, sculpin,' says he; 'I can't stand here all day talking to the likes of you.'

"'That's enough,' said Dare, 'to hang him. Now, Chic, I will give you three days' holiday to stay at home with your mother. Here's two doubloons to give her, and a V for yourself. Be ready at the end of your leave to go back with me in the sloop.'

"'Thank you, sir,' said Chic, and off he went.

CHAPTER LV.

THE OLD MAN FROM AFRICA.

DARE had been absent two days, and his mother began to feel anxious at his not returning. Where one has once lost anything he is more than usually careful. So it was with Agnes; she was full of fears. The hours passed heavily, but everything went on

well in the house. The old gentleman from Africa improved rapidly, and was able to walk about his room.

At the moment of which we write a sound as of some musical instrument proceeded from up-stairs. It was a wild, unearthly sound, as if numbers of little bagpipes and miniature fish-horns had somehow got mixed up together. The family listened in wonder; they had never heard such music as that before. What could it be? Suddenly the door of the old gentleman's room opened, and there issued forth such a blast as nearly took the roof off.

When the gentleman from Africa had blown himself out he sent his attendant down to say that he hoped he hadn't disturbed the family; that playing on his instrument was his favorite recreation when he was well, and now that he was getting better he felt lonesome, and played for company's sake.

"O Mary!" said Agnes, "I fear we are not very kind to the sick man in Charles's absence. One of us ought to call and see if he wants anything. He has lost all his family, Charles says, and no doubt misses the affection of wife and children. Now, Mary, you are more accustomed to the world than I am, and know exactly how to talk to the old gentleman. Think how we should feel if Charles were sick and no one around took any notice of him, and this poor man is so unhappy!"

At that moment they heard the old gentleman say, in a melancholy voice, "Oh! when shall I see the graves of my dead?" and then his musical instrument fairly shrieked.

After he had finished his lamentations Agnes said, "Mary, dear, do send up and see if he will receive you. It is dreadful to hear a man go on so when perhaps a kind word would soothe him. He misses Charles, who amused him."

"Certainly, mother," said Mary, "I will go and see if I can be of any service to the gentleman, and cheer him up if possible." And she told the attendant to say to Mr. Mungo Park that she would call on him if he would receive her.

Mary heard the old gentleman say, "I shall be delighted to receive her, and with music, too, as I always did Queen Tom Tom." And the old man hustled around the room, putting things to rights. "Here," he said to the attendant, "open this trunk, and I'll show you how we do in Africa when ladies of quality call," and he took out a package rolled up in oiled silk. From the package he took out and spread upon the floor a piece of coarsely made yellow silk, about twelve feet long and six feet wide, in the center of which was

worked a huge blue crocodile with gold eyes. Then he took out a similar cloth and spread it over the chair. "Now," he said, "let her ladyship enter."

He stood in front of the door, with his head bowed and his Pan-pipes in hand, waiting to receive Mary, while she, poor child! amazed at the appearance of things, stopped upon the threshold.

The old man raised his head to put the instrument to his mouth, but stopped as if transfixed. The instrument fell from his hand, and he trembled like a leaf. There he stood, with his eyes starting from their sockets, mumbling something Mary did not understand. At length he said, "Ah, no! it can not be; my senses are leaving me. How like, and yet more beautiful! Had my daughter lived she would perhaps be like this. O God! what did I do that you should deprive me of my blessings?" and he put his hand over his eyes, while heavy sighs came from his breast.

Mary was frightened at this strange scene, but, feeling sorry for the old gentleman, she plucked up her courage and took him by the hand. "Don't grieve, sir," she said; "we will do all we can to comfort you."

"Ah!" said the old man, "that is the trouble; the chance of comfort is all gone now. I see in you all that I have lost. *She* would have been like you had she lived, but she is dead. My path on earth is full of thorns that ever prick my feet—but I am treating your ladyship rudely; let me honor you as I did Queen Tom Tom," and he led Mary to the chair and seated her. Then he sat down cross-legged on the floor before her.

It struck Mary that the old gentleman had a screw loose, as the saying is, and she determined to humor him. "I hope, sir," she said, "that you are better, and that you want for nothing."

"I want nothing but death, sweet lady," he replied, "and that won't come. Still I have been happier in this house than I have for years before. Where is that grand young fellow who foolishly saved an old man's life?"

"My brother, you mean," answered Mary.

"Ah, yes!" said the old man. "I remember now he told me he had just found his mother and sister. Well, well, some are born to luck, and some drink the bitter fennel-waters through life. My life was so happy once. I did not thank heaven enough for it. My cup was wreathed with flowers; I did not see what lurked within. I have gone through every misery in life, and my heart is a deep well of despair—but there goes the old croaker again."

What right have I to sadden your sweet, fresh heart with my woes ? It is like inviting a friend to a bad dinner, and complaining all the time that it is not better, when perhaps, if nothing was said, the visitor would not notice the failure. Ah me !” he continued, “how much you remind me of her, the object of my life ! But how rude I am ! I have not even inquired the name of my hostess, and your brother did not tell me.”

“My mother is Mrs. Samson,” said Mary, keeping to the name by which they had so long been known.

“I am Mungo Park,” he said ; “how are you called ?”

“My name is Mary Samson,” she replied.

“And a dear, sweet name it is. The name of Mary comes back in my memory like new-mown hay in the month of June. It brings me life and vigor, and yet what sad memories arise !”

He gazed on Mary intently. Suddenly jumping up, he exclaimed, “I have something for you. I could not think before why I brought it, for I have no one in the country to give it to. Providence directs all things, and Providence sends this to you.”

The old man took from his bag a rough stone and put it in her hand. “There,” he said, “I don’t know what that may be worth, but it was given me by Queen Tom Tom for stuffing her favorite crocodile, which died of indigestion and threw the Court into mourning for three years. Queen Tom Tom didn’t do things by halves ; whatever she gave was valuable.”

“But I can’t take anything valuable,” said Mary. “Indeed, I ought not to take anything from you ; you may need it for your own use.”

“I shall want nothing long,” said the old man. “I can’t live out the time ordained for my punishment. I must fall off a precipice by accident—but there I go, croaking again—the old thunder-cloud walking about on two legs. Now, I must tell you something of my adventures in Africa,” and he gave Mary accounts of many marvelous things he had seen, and she, to please him, kept the stone, determined to return it through her brother.

In ten minutes Agnes heard her daughter’s musical laugh ringing through the hall. Mary was so amused at the old man’s account of things in Africa that she could not restrain her laughter, and the old man joined in with her, laying aside his croaking altogether. “This is the first time, sweet child,” he said, “that I have really laughed for over twenty years ; but you are a vision that must ever bring happiness to an old man’s heart. It is like

reaching a spring in a beautiful oasis after a long march through the hot, sandy desert."

Mary stayed with the old gentleman two hours, until Agnes said to herself, "The dear child is sacrificing herself to please him, and is pouring balm into his wounds. Why, they seem as merry as crickets. Charles will be so pleased!"

When Mary arose to go, the old man took her hand. "This," said he, "is a great sacrifice on your part to please me. I hope you will come again, for your presence does me good. And bring your mother with you. I want to express to her my thanks for her hospitality, and to show her Queen Tom Tom's night-cap, worked with her own royal hands, which she gave me when I took my leave of her. Queen Tom Tom is eighty years old, and can dance like a fairy. I shall leave here the moment your brother returns, and I should be pleased if your mother would visit me to-morrow."

"On one condition she will do so," said Mary, "and that is provided you will receive her without all this ceremony. She is very timid, and this will frighten her."

"I agree to everything for the honor of the visit. I want to carry away in my heart the images of those who have shown me so much kindness—equal to the hospitality I met with in Africa."

Mary promised that her mother would come, and, bidding the old man good-by, went down, and told Agnes what a nice gentleman he was, and how much she had enjoyed her visit. "Why, mamma," said Mary, "he is not at all old. If it wasn't for his long white beard and hair he would be really handsome. He has a beautiful nose, and his eyes are bright as diamonds. He has fine teeth, and his figure is as straight as that of a young man."

"Well, I declare!" said Agnes, "if Mary is not in love with Mr. Mungo Park! Why, child, you seem to have been fascinated by this old gentleman. What will the young man at Hawks' Roost say? I mean the one you confessed to your mamma about the other day—you naughty child, to keep it from me so long, when you must have known how I would sympathize with you! Have I ever forgotten those delicious moments when your father first told me he loved me, and we two used to sit together by the hour and compare notes? How we felt at one time; and at another we thought we had found a great treasure and were hiding it away so that nobody would see it, and all the time every one saw it, and often, we thought, envied us. Ah me! I shall enjoy it all again in the spirit, when God calls me to him; but I hope to live to see you

married, and your children growing up around you. But, Mary, my darling, if you get on so rapidly with Mr. Park, I am afraid the other will come to grief."

"O mamma!" said Mary, blushing, "don't talk so foolishly; but I must say Mr. Park is a most agreeable gentleman; you'll say so yourself when you meet him. Now remember, mamma, you are to go up to-morrow at twelve o'clock to see Queen Tom Tom's night-cap."

"Yes, dear," said Agnes, "I will go; if I can cast one flower in his path to help render his journey through life more pleasant, it would be wicked in me to refuse to do it. We will call and see Mr. Mungo Park to-morrow, and if I don't find him as fascinating as you do, I shall yet, no doubt, be amused with him."

"You dear old mamma," said Mary, "I shouldn't be surprised to see you flirting with the old gentleman before we get through our interview with him."

"No, my love," said Agnes, "I never flirted with any one. I don't like the expression, even in jest. The word is a reflection on what ought to be considered the purest feeling on earth—a feeling no one ought to trifle with."

That night, at bed-time, the faintest sound of music could be heard in the old gentleman's room—so faint that it sounded like an *Æolian* harp in the far distance. The plaintive air was like the voice of a young child begging its mother's forgiveness; then again it was as if angels were whispering. Every one was silent while the music lasted, and finally it died away and could be heard no more.

"It is the old man with his dead," said Agnes and Mary, "and may God have mercy on his sufferings."

The next day, before noon, a cheerful sound of music came from the old man's room. The Pan-pipes really discoursed eloquently. First they played as if welcoming some one; then they burst forth in a triumphal march, and wound up finally with what sounded like praise to heaven. Then the door was opened, and Mr. Mungo Park waited, with bowed head, the approach of the ladies.

Agnes was rather nervous at the idea of the interview with the eccentric stranger, and all the ceremony had the effect of still further discomposing her; but Mary encouraged her, and they stood within the threshold of the door.

Mungo Park was kneeling upon the embroidered carpet, with his head upon his breast as if in attitude of obeisance to some high personage. "Great and good lady," he said, "behold the humblest

of your slaves. I came to you footsore and wounded, and you took me in ; I was hungry, and you fed me ; I was athirst, and you gave me to drink. I bow to you as I would to the highest potentate in Africa. May God preserve you and your daughter many years in health and happiness. I came to this country to visit my dead, for I am alone and full of sorrow, and your kindness has been the first sunshine I have felt in my heart for many years."

While the old man was speaking, Agnes stood as if transfixed. Her arms were stretched toward the stranger, and there was a joyous light in her eyes such as had not been seen there for years. Her lips were apart with a smile of ineffable joy. At length she timidly approached the old man, as if his voice fascinated her, and laid her hand gently upon his snow-white head.

At the touch of Agnes's hand the old man looked up ; then, springing to his feet with the agility of a youth, he regarded her keenly, seized her hand, and pressed it to his breast. "O God of heaven !" he exclaimed, "at last you are merciful ! at last my pilgrimage is ended ! Or is this a delusion of the devil to raise my hopes, only to cast me into the abyss of despair ? Is this a spirit come to mock me, and make life still more intolerable, or is it a spirit of joy and happiness that will remain with me while I live ? Speak, sweet spirit, or I shall die at your feet !"

Agnes seemed to have lost the power of speech and of motion, but stood gazing at the figure before her with the same heavenly radiance in her face.

The old man still held her hand unresistingly in his. "Agnes," he said, "is this your spirit come to welcome me to the graves of my departed ones, or is it your own sweet self that I have lost and have found again, after the lapse of so many years ?"

Agnes only smiled, while tears of joy filled her eyes. "Oh, no !" she exclaimed, "this is not Mungo Park ; it is my own long-lost James, whom God in his mercy has restored to me ; but how changed ! Look, Mary, this is your own dear father, for whom I have grieved so long," and she threw her arms around the old man's neck and sobbed for joy.

"Ah !" she said, looking into the bewildered eyes of James, "here is one whom you never saw until yesterday ; but not a day of her life has passed that she has not sent up prayers that you would be returned to us, and her prayers at last have been answered. Ah ! James," she continued, "I knew the first sound of your voice. These are the same eyes that looked so lovingly in

mine in days gone by. His hair, like mine, is white with sorrow, but I feel our hearts are as fresh and true as when we parted twenty-two years ago."

She put back his hair from his brow and gazed earnestly into his face. "Let us kneel together in prayer," she said, "and give thanks to the Almighty for bringing us together in so marvelous a way. How beautiful the world will look to us henceforth, when we spend the rest of our lives together!"

All three fell upon their knees and poured forth their thanks for this happy reunion in language that came from their souls.

Then James Gale, no longer Mungo Park, pressed his wife to his heart. "Here, before God," he said, "I pledge my faith again to you, sweet wife, whose image has never been absent from my thoughts since the day I parted from you."

He led Agnes to the chair over which he had thrown the African silk cover. "There rest, my queen," he said, "while I sit at your feet and pay you all due respect. I came to visit my dead, but find sweet living hearts to welcome me. O God, I have repined at thy visitation; I thank you now and henceforward for this happiness."

"I have waited for you to come," said Agnes. "I felt that you and the boys would return to me ere I died; and God gave me this sweet child, my own Mary, to cheer me in my dreary pilgrimage. Ah!" she said, passing her hand over her husband's face, "how sunburned you are! yet there are still the dear features I loved in youth."

"I loved this child," said James, "the first moment I saw her. I recognized her likeness to you, and last night I never closed my eyes thinking of her. A light radiance entered my room at midnight; I rose and went down on my knees. 'Great God in heaven,' I prayed, 'thy mercy is soon to show itself; I know not in what way;' and then there came over me the spirit of peace, and my anguish passed away. The moment I saw you, Agnes, I knew you, for age has changed you but little, and your beautiful eyes are undimmed. Your white hair, every lock of which is a tribute to my memory, frames a face as young and innocent as ever." James sat at Agnes's knee as in years gone by, her hand clasped in his, while Mary looked fondly into his face.

"Mamma," said Mary, "you know I told you that I should not be surprised to see you flirting with the gentleman up-stairs before the day was over; lo! and behold, my expectations are verified!"

"Yes, you deceitful little girl," said Agnes, "you said so because you came down-stairs so enraptured with Mungo Park that I had to remind you that another person—you know who—had a prior claim. Now you will have to give this one up to me altogether; he is all mine now. His toils are over; he will sink his sorrows in my breast, and what a world of glory has he won in finding his dead alive, knowing he well deserves the joy that now is his! He has carried though life a fervent soul and lived on the memory of our love, which he has borne in his breast through scorching heats, under cloudless skies, and through all adversity. Go where he would, I was ever with him in spirit, so that I may truly say our souls were never apart."

"How God has blessed me in my children!" said James Gale. "Dear wife, we may well feel proud of our daughter and of that glorious boy who performed such wonders on that storm-tossed wreck. Oh, what an iron link is he to hold us all together, and what a support for our Mary to lean upon!"

How passed the day none of those three could tell. They seemed to be sailing on a silver stream running between flowery banks, sweet music floating through the air, and sunshine illuminating everything. The spirit of peace filled their hearts; the world for them seemed to have none but halcyon days. They talked of the other son, too, whom Mary had met and could so well describe, and the father's heart swelled with pride to think he had such children. He little dreamed that one of them, with all his grace and beauty, was deeply steeped in crime; and may he be spared the knowledge.

The papers had long since ceased to speak of Robert le Diable. He was a nine days' wonder, and, like everything else, later events had driven the subject from the public mind; and, come what would, no one would know that James Deville was James Gale's reckless son. His brother was the only one who knew the secret of his birth, and it would not be his fault if Deville's crimes were not buried in oblivion.

Allan Dare had done his duty in breaking up the nest of robbers, and now he had determined to redeem his brother from his guilty life and let him know his mother and sister. Oh, what joy there would be in obtaining tears of repentance from that erring brother and leading him to that home which only needed his presence to complete his mother's happiness! But what would Allan say when he returned to Holmes's farm and found a

father? Truly, he would think Mr. Lindsay had a prophetic soul.

Agnes grieved to see that her husband's mind was somewhat warped, and that he spoke so strangely of his adventures in Africa; but she attributed it to hardships and sorrows, which care and love would doubtless remove. She determined that her whole life should be devoted to him, and that she would never leave him as long as they lived.

Agnes was impatient for her son's return, that she might show him the jewel of her soul, so long lost and now recovered.

CHAPTER LVI.

FAMILY REUNIONS.

VERE SAYE went to Mrs. Eton's the day before his intended return to Holmes's farm. He told Mrs. Eton that he should remove Flossy, if she were willing, to a new home, where she would be under the care of his relatives. "She must be prepared," he said, "to start next morning at ten o'clock."

Flossy agreed to go, although there had been a coldness in Vere Saye's manner ever since she hesitated to believe in him when George May denounced him as a convict. He had never spoken of love to her since that day, but he loved her none the less.

George May had gone away, none knew where, but he had not put into execution his threat to expose Vere Saye to the world. He was probably not sure but that the coachman was mistaken; but, whatever his motive, he made no sign, and Flossy now felt sure that his accusation was false. She only wanted her lover to speak sweet words and take her to his heart again.

The last thing Vere Saye did before departing for the Holmes farm was to liberate Flossy's uncle.

When he let Brice out of the room where he had been confined the rascal inflated his cheeks, and, turning on his heel, said, coolly, "Good-morning; I hope we shall meet no more."

"Go," said Vere Saye, frowning, "and try to be a better man."

"Thank you," replied Brice, "I'll think of it." But, as he left the house, he muttered, "D—n you, I'll mar your future yet!"

The next day chanced to be a beautiful one, with fresh, crisp air, and Flossy needed all her wraps. The breeze brought the roses to her cheeks as, with buoyant spirits, she ran around the decks of the sloop. The wind was fair, and at three o'clock in the afternoon the vessel came to at her old anchorage.

Then Vere Saye, Flossy, and Chic got into a Jersey wagon and drove to the Holmes farm-house.

As they drove up to the door, James Gale and Agnes were sitting at the window, with Mary close by. Mary jumped to her feet and exclaimed, "Mother, there is brother Charles, and he has brought Flossy back with him. Did you ever see any one so beautiful?"

"No, I never did," said Agnes. "I hope she is as good as she is beautiful. I shall love her dearly."

Charles Gale helped Flossy from the wagon, and led her into the house. To his astonishment, he saw his mother with her hand in that of Mungo Park. "Ah! you see," said the old traveler to Charles, "I am making myself at home. I have renewed some old friendships since you left, and find my dead are all alive. I am glad now that you saved my life. I'll no longer be a cloud on two legs, casting a shadow over a merry crowd. How do you like the looks of things?"

Walking up to the traveler he said, "Father, welcome home; you have been a long time coming, but better late than never." And he embraced his parent affectionately.

"Now, dear father, mother, and sister," he resumed, "I'll introduce my intended wife, Miss Flossy Carrolton. Take her to your hearts; she is worthy of all your love. And now, dear Flossy, bid adieu to Vere Saye, for you will never see him more"—at this Flossy looked dreadfully alarmed—"but in his place you'll find quite as clever a fellow in Charles Gale. Vere Saye had neither father, mother, nor sister; Charles Gale has all. Love them, dear Flossy, for their home will be your home for a long time—if you will consent to marry a convict. We must all live together, and try and make these old people so happy that they will forget the long martyrdom they have suffered."

The African traveler fell in love with Flossy at first sight, and so did Agnes. Flossy was beside herself with joy, and wondered how she had lived all these years without her newly found friends.

"Charles," said his father, "you are too lucky for your luck to last; to get father, mother, sister, and brother in one week is

great good luck ; but to get, besides, such a girl as Flossy for a wife is the greatest piece of good fortune I ever heard of. Take her to Africa, my boy, and they will make you and her king and queen of the whole country. They would seat her in a chariot of crocodile's hide, drawn by six rhinoceroses, with ten out-riders on cameloparda. That's an honor no European monarch enjoys."

"Or wants to," said his son, laughing.

It would be impossible to describe the joy that reigned at Holmes's farm at this moment. Flossy and Mary were never apart; they were enchanted with each other. Neither of them had ever had a friend before of whom they could make a confidant, and no girl can be happy who has not a confidant, especially if she is in love.

Charles complained that Flossy was taken from him altogether, and said to her, "Flossy, you had better marry Mary at once."

"Oh, you great spoiled boy!" said Flossy, "I can't recognize a man with so many names. You are not the same old fellow to whom I became engaged at Hawks' Roost, and therefore you will have to go through with that ceremony again."

"I am willing to go through with it any number of times," replied Charles, "but Mary must let me have you sometimes, or I shall invite a Mr. Harry Somebody down here, and you will see then whom she will cuddle up to."

The captain of the sloop came for orders. He was to return to New York that evening to bring down the men again in case they should be wanted.

"I want to send a letter by you," said Charles, "to be delivered into the hands of the chief of police." The letter was as follows :

"MY DEAR SIR: Wonders will never cease. In Mungo Park, the African traveler of whom I told you, I have found my father, who was wrecked in the ship Fame. In time I will redeem my brother James from the error of his ways, and we shall all sit down together as a happy family. Yours,

"ALLAN DARE."

"Ah!" said the chief, on reading the letter, "I knew Dare would find something, but the most unlikely thing in the world was his father, who has been over twenty years at the bottom of the Atlantic."

It was astonishing how James Gale progressed during the next ten days. He kept close to his wife's side, and, if tempted to a walk, would shake his head and say, "No, no, not unless Agnes

goes with me. I shall never leave her again as long as I live. We have twenty-two years of lost time to make up, and probably less than twenty years to do it in."

At the end of his son's leave, when told that it would be necessary for him to go to the city to secure some property, he replied, "No, never, unless Agnes goes with me. I want no property; all I owned in Africa was a couple of clam-shells with King Tom Tom's autograph on them, and they carried me twenty thousand miles over that blessed country, most of the distance on the back of a rhinoceros."

When told that Agnes would accompany him, the old man agreed reluctantly to the proposition. "What nonsense is this," he said, "to be owning property! You don't know how happy you are without it. Then, if I go to the city, the people will stare at me and take me for an orang-outang. When I was at the Cape of Good Hope a scoundrel actually made a proposition to exhibit me in England as a real specimen, and I had to go on board ship at night to avoid the crowd. I knew," he said, "that all the boys would be at his heels hooting after me." But when assured by his son that he would ride from the wharf direct to his house in a close carriage, and then back to the wharf again, where he would embark for Holmes's farm, the old man consented to go, but said he must trim his hair and beard. To this Charles objected, for reasons which he would not then state.

Charles Gale considered that he had now perfected his chain of evidence against Morton, especially as Chic had succeeded in fixing on Morton the ownership of the portmanteau.

He had a theory of his own who this Morton really was, but had never hinted it to any one. He felt great repugnance to the idea, and determined to try every measure possible before resorting to the one that would be conclusive.

Everything was in train, and Charles had obtained an order of arrest from the chief of police in case the proofs against Morton were sufficient to connect him with the villainy laid to his charge; "for," said the chief, "to fail in such a charge against a man of Morton's standing would ruin us all.

On the appointed day the whole family, Flossy included, started early in the morning for the city in the sloop, and, arriving there before noon, drove direct to Charles's house, where the chief of police waited to receive them.

After introducing his family to the chief, Charles dressed him-

self for the last time as Vere Saye, and then took a carriage, accompanied by a policeman, and proceeded to Morton's bank. He directed the policeman to follow him into the bank when he saw Morton and himself go into the back room, and to stand ready for a call.

When Vere Saye entered the bank he was shown to Morton's private office, and found the distinguished financier examining some accounts at a table. He arose and met his visitor with bland courtesy, inviting him to sit down.

"No," said Vere Saye, "I will not detain you more than five minutes, and, as I do not want to be interrupted, will request you to lock the door."

"Certainly," said the banker, suiting the action to the word.

"To come straight to the point," said Vere Saye, "do you recognize this article?" laying on the table, as he spoke, the iron bar found in the ruins of the fire.

Not a muscle of Morton's face moved, nor did his color change as he replied, calmly, "I never saw it before. Why do you ask?"

"Because it has been traced home to you. It was found at the Holmes farm-house in New Jersey, where you placed Mrs. Gale and her daughter for the purpose of making way with them. You were seen to run from the building after setting fire to the house, leaving this iron bar behind you, with which you had murdered the cook. You dropped a portmanteau in your flight, and have the mark of a wound on your person, given while you were escaping. I can prove that you left here on a certain afternoon, in the steamer *Little Joke*, for Shrewsbury River, landed at a certain point, and afterward returned in the steamer to this city."

Mr. Morton gazed at his visitor in astonishment. "Mr. Vere Saye," he exclaimed, "are you mad to utter such nonsense? Do you know the penalty of such trifling? I am not able to throw you out of the window, but I will turn you over to the police," and he moved toward the door.

Vere Saye put his hand on the banker's shoulder and held him as if in a vise. "Wait a moment, and listen to what I have further to say. I have the letter you wrote twenty years ago to Agnes Gale from Albany, threatening her life in case she did not leave Manchester and change her name. Here is the sleeve-button you dropped the night you set fire to Gale House. I have eight letters from James Gale, speaking of certain moneys sent to his brother

Charles. You are supposed to have built your fortune on that money, which you embezzled. Here is a letter of instruction given to Edgar Lane the night he was murdered, and two forged letters of introduction. I can prove by your own servant that you sent him to purchase a tin can full of turpentine, the tin being afterward found in the portmanteau you dropped in your flight."

"And you expect to make the world believe such stuff?" coolly inquired Morton. "I can send you to the penitentiary for this cowardly attempt at blackmailing. I never knew any person named Gale in my life. I never was in Manchester, and don't know where the place is. I never was in Shrewsbury River, and know nothing of the circumstances you pretend to relate. But why make explanations to a madman? Go, before I punish you as you deserve."

"Sit down and listen to me," said Vere Saye.

"I will sit down," replied Morton, "because I find myself in the power of a lunatic; but remember, I will deal out to you the full extent of the law for this outrage, if it costs me a million."

"Perhaps you haven't the million to do it with."

For the first time Morton winced. He thought to himself, "This man must stand on high ground to be so positive, but his evidence will not amount to anything. I am prepared to dispose of it all."

As Morton sat in his chair he slipped his hand under the table, and suddenly taking a pistol from a drawer, pointed it at Vere Saye's heart and fired. The bullet struck Vere Saye in the breast, and fell harmless to the floor.

"Murderer!" exclaimed Vere Saye; "do you suppose I would come into the presence of such a villain as you are unprepared? I arrest you for high crimes and misdemeanors, and should you attempt to evade the authority of the law, I will shoot you down like a dog. There is my warrant for your arrest."

"Do you imagine," said Morton, quite as cool as his opponent, "that I would hold any terms with a scoundrel such as you—who, under the guise of a gentleman, with forged letters of introduction, sneaked into my house and played the eavesdropper, who, according to his own account, stole private papers at midnight when the family were asleep, and who waylaid and murdered my secretary in order to procure the papers he carried?"

The noise of the pistol-shot had alarmed the clerks in the bank, who hurried to the office-door. Vere Saye rose, unlocked the door, and carelessly seated himself at the table. When the clerks rushed

in and saw Morton and Vere Saye sitting quietly together, they attempted to withdraw.

"Stop!" said Morton; "you know my orders were for you not to enter my office under any circumstances, unless called by bell, on pain of discharge. Tell the cashier to pay you off, and be gone."

"That shows your heart better than anything else," said Vere Saye. "Even the sympathy these young men showed for your safety has been the cause of their ruin, and you turn them into the street as if they were dogs."

"That is my affair," said Morton; "but don't try to evade the charge of murder I shall bring home to you before I have done with you."

"It does look like it," said Vere Saye, "does it not? But, unfortunately, I have evidence in my possession that will rebut anything you say. Edgar Lane was your daughter's husband; it is probable she was a party to his murder, in order that she might marry Conrad, to whom she had become affianced."

Morton for the first time became excited, and jumped from his seat with flashing eyes. "The scoundrel! Louise would have been right to murder him, who enticed her to such a *mésalliance*!"

"Murder is evidently a trifling affair in your eyes," said Vere Saye; "you would kill any one who stood in the way of your ambition."

"I may confess that much to you," said Morton, "since you can't use it as evidence. No one would believe you then; no one would believe you now. Yet I want no complications. How much do you want to induce you to give up to me the forged evidence in your possession? It would be troublesome to be brought before a court, and I might as well pay you as pay the jury; so name your price."

"In less than twenty-four hours," said Vere Saye, "I shall strip you so completely of your fortune that you will have nothing left to bribe anybody with."

"Ah," said Morton, coolly, "is it as bad as that? You don't know all my means, evidently; you are wise in your own conceit."

"I know every cent you own," said Vere Saye; "five hundred thousand dollars in Bank of England stock, and a thousand acres of land in Ireland. You evidently intend to emigrate."

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed Morton, "is there no matter of mine that you have not been prying into?"

"None; and I intend to strip you of every cent in the world. It will depend on my liberality whether your family have enough left to buy a meal."

"Bah! do you take me for a child? You can never prove anything against me, no matter what papers you cook up. As to your buttons, bludgeons, and portmanteaus, I attach no importance to them whatever."

"Look at this extract from Bullion & Co.'s books," said Vere Saye: "'Pair gold sleeve-buttons sold Charles Morton, December 5, 18—, \$30; are replaced December 9, 18—.'"

"You do your dirty work thoroughly," sneered Morton.

"You must meet fire with fire," replied Vere Saye. "Now, sir, I want to have as little publicity in this matter as possible. What I learned while receiving your hospitality was entirely accidental. I revere your wife, and would save her any suffering."

"Name your price then."

"My price is every cent you have made out of the Gale estate, or I will part you from your wife for ever."

With one spring Morton's hands were at Vere Saye's throat, but his wrists were caught in the young man's powerful hands, and the banker sank back again in his chair.

"Your love for your wife, one virtue amid a thousand crimes, may save your neck," said Vere Saye; "but, so help me God, if you refuse to make instant restitution of all you have stolen from the Gale estate I will part you from the woman you hold most dear."

Cold drops of perspiration stood on Morton's forehead. "Better kill me at once," he said, in a husky voice. "To part from me would kill her; it would send me to the mad-house to part with her. But you have no proof; you are playing upon my fears, and I, knowing how the world is given to scandal against those who have made their mark, and how prone people are to try and pull down their betters, lost my head. I have been fool enough to show my weakness, and let you get the better of me. You have no proof that I care for, and I defy you."

"In that case," said Vere Saye, "you will have to accompany me on this warrant. For your family's sake I will still leave a door open to you, and it depends upon yourself whether the world ever knows of this. You will have to be my guest for a day or two, and you may change your mind after you have had a little time for reflection. Write a note and say to Mrs. Morton that business calls

you away ; then come with me to my house as if nothing were the matter."

"Is your house the jail?" asked Morton, scornfully.

"No, it is my private residence. Let me advise you to lay aside this hectoring tone, which ill becomes you in your present position. In an hour you will be satisfied that I mean to be lenient to you, for the sake of your wife."

"Bosh!" exclaimed Morton; "I will beat you yet. I was a fool to let you see my weak spot." And he preceded Vere Saye into the carriage, which waited at the door.

Neither spoke on the way, and, when the carriage stopped at the door, they alighted and entered the house. Passing the front-room door, merry voices and female laughter were heard, and in the intervals the voice of a man relating some story.

Morton paused for a moment at hearing the man's voice, and shuddered. It reminded him of a voice he had not heard for many years, but he followed Vere Saye along the passage, and they entered the room beyond.

"Take a seat," said Vere Saye. "There are refreshments on the side-board." Morton helped himself to brandy, and then sat down.

At this moment the man's voice was again heard in the adjoining room recounting some anecdote amid peals of laughter, in which he himself joined.

"What farce is this?" said Morton, angrily. "What does it mean?"

"It simply means," said Vere Saye, "that my family are enjoying themselves in the most innocent manner. As you will be my guest for a day or two, I will take pleasure in introducing them to you."

"As I suppose my wishes are not to be consulted, let us have it over, though I would greatly prefer to be alone."

"That is not possible under existing circumstances. They await your coming."

"They expect me, you say? Why upon earth should your family expect me?"

Vere Saye opened the door leading into the next apartment, and the laughter ceased. "Come in, friends," he said, "and let me introduce you to Mr. Morton!"

The African traveler entered first, with outstretched hand, but stopped suddenly, exclaiming, "Is this the spirit of Charles Gale come from the grave, or do my eyes deceive me?"

As for Morton, his courage quite deserted him ; he turned pale, and put out his hand as if to save himself from falling.

"Take them away ! take them away !" he cried. "I give up everything ; spare me further punishment." Then he fell senseless to the floor.

All rushed to help the prostrate man except Allan, who stood calmly looking on. James Gale poured some brandy down Morton's throat, saying, "Charles, what does all this mean ? Who is this fac-simile of my brother whom you call Morton ? He seems to be dying."

"No danger of that, father," said the son ; "he is too wicked to die. This, sir, is your brother, Charles Gale, to whom you sent sixty thousand dollars from China. He never let any one know that he had the money, gave out that he was going to China to settle your affairs, and engaged passage in the bark Nimrod without the least intention of sailing in her ; went to Albany and changed his name to Morton, persuading his wife that it was necessary for him to do so to inherit some money, which accounted to her for his wealth. This is the man who wrote threatening letters to my mother, and finally burned her dwelling on a cold winter's night.

"He has pursued her ever since, in order to take her life. He placed her and Mary at Holmes's farm, and, when opportunity offered, fastened them up in the house and set fire to it. I have brought your brother here to expose him, and make him restore what he has stolen. Do you think I ought to have any mercy on such a wretch as this ?"

"No, Charles," answered his father, "but your mother and I can forgive him, and I am sure Mary will for the sake of one she loves. We are all so happy now ; do not let anything disturb it. I once loved him dearly, and still have an affection for him. Let him keep his wealth for which he has labored so hard. I have my two clam-shells that King Tom Tom gave me, and I have never wanted for money all the twenty odd years of my wandering."

"But your two clam-shells will not answer in this country. We need hard money in this benighted region to pay for board and lodging."

"Then why not all of us go to that blessed land of Africa ? I can always make a living there as Queen Tom Tom's crocodile-keeper ; it's a most fascinating occupation."

Agnes whispered to her husband, "James, that is right ; leave

your brother what he has, and forgive him. Poor fellow ! see how he suffers."

Morton had soon recovered his senses, and, lying with closed eyes, heard all that was said. At length he opened his eyes, his pallid face quivering in every muscle, while tears rolled down his cheeks—the first tears of repentance he had ever shed. He clasped his brother's hand. "I will give up all," he said; "I won't keep a cent. It is all yours. I would not lose my wife's love for all that I have endangered my soul for. I trust God may forgive me. You will hate me, and I deserve it."

"The devil ! we won't love you !" exclaimed the African traveler, "when you have worked so hard for me all the time I was away. Why, in that blessed land of Africa everybody forgives everybody. Why, King Tom Tom fought another king for sixteen years, and finally chopped his head off in battle. Then he paid him the highest honors, invited fifty kings to dinner, and served up the dead king and ate him. Of course we'll forgive you. Do you think I forget how we loved each other as boys ? Come, cheer up, and let us go and see Mary ; we haven't met for a long time." Poor James ! his mental powers had suffered in the many years of privation and sorrow he had experienced, and God had mercifully lightened his pain by making him see things through a cheerful medium.

Agnes felt proud of her husband as he expressed these Christian sentiments, though she did not quite understand his enthusiastic admiration of the manners and customs of Central Africa.

"Dear father and mother," said Charles Gale the younger, "I am sure that my uncle, Mr. Charles Gale, will agree with me that I am the proper person to settle this matter and do justice to all. The world is never charitable when it finds a flaw in the family relations, and relatives should never publish their difficulties. Mr. Gale will do me the justice to say that I have been generous toward him in all this matter."

"You have been merciful in not exposing me to the world," said his uncle. "All my troubles arose from my first fault—yielding to the temptation to use that sixty thousand dollars. The first step taken, progress on the downward road became easy, and the fear of detection led me from one crime to another. All I ask is that there shall be no exposure ; let me be able to tell my wife that I have fulfilled my promise to her and given up everything to the heirs. To lose her love would be to drive me mad ; the fear of doing so has tempted me to more crime. I have gone on getting more

and more entangled, and the most fortunate thing, brother James, is that your son has brought matters to a culmination without destroying the happiness of one as pure as his own mother. She never erred but once—that was when she consented I should change my name in order to inherit money. I insist on making restitution at once; then I can go home and take my wife in my arms with a feeling I have been a stranger to for many years.”

“Anticipating the result of this meeting,” said Charles Gale the younger, “I have drawn up the necessary papers, and will call in my friend, the chief of police, who is discretion itself, as a witness. A friend of mine, Allan Dare, whose name is on the secret books of the police, will be the other witness, so that it will all be as it were in the family, and no one will ever know of this transaction. I have also conveyances made out for all bank property and moneys now in bank, and for the real estate in the city of New York—forty lots valued at five hundred thousand dollars; four stores on Broadway, three hundred and twenty thousand dollars; nine hundred thousand dollars in bank; fifty thousand dollars in Ferry stock; five hundred thousand dollars in British three per cents, and thirty thousand pounds in Irish lands; in all, two million four hundred and twenty thousand dollars.”

“Well, Brother Charles,” said the traveler, “that is what I call doing well with the money I sent you, and it all comes from the ten thousand dollars I invested in opium in China. It looks more like the way things are done in that blessed land of Africa than anything I have seen yet.”

Charles Gale went out to call the chief of police, to whom he said, “I have found my uncle, Charles Gale, who was lost in the Nimrod.”

“You will find all your ancestors if you go on at this rate,” said the chief.

In the course of a couple of hours all the papers were signed, sealed, and delivered, and, when they were once more alone, Charles Gale, senior, remarked, “I am now a pauper, but happier than I was with all my wealth. Now, brother James, will you take my hand?”

“Take your hand!” said James; “why shouldn’t I, after all you have done for us? Here it is,” and he almost shook his brother’s arm off. “And, old fellow,” he said, “you are not a pauper by a good deal. If I had my way you should keep all the property; that’s the way they do things in Africa. When I left that happy

country Queen Tom Tom gave me everything she had, including her royal night-cap worked with her own royal hands."

Then Charles Gale, senior, begged Agnes's forgiveness, which was freely accorded. "I can bear no malice after coming into possession of so much joy," she said. "I value very little the money you say is ours, and, as far as James and I are concerned, you should keep it, but my son Charles thinks that would not be right."

"Yes," said the traveler, "the Ferry stock will be made over to your youngest daughter, Brother Charles, and one hundred and fifty thousand dollars is to go to Mary when she marries your son."

"Stop, father," interrupted Charles, "that is all *entre nous*—don't say any more."

"I only wanted to give him an idea of how we do things in Africa," said the traveler. "Why, King Tom Tom—"

"Never mind the king, darling," said Agnes, taking her husband's hand, "you shall tell us all about Africa some other time," and she led the traveler into the adjoining room, seated him on the sofa, and, taking his face between her hands, kissed him affectionately. Two lovers just united were never more happy.

Agnes felt that her husband would be more or less dependent on her for the rest of his life, for, though at times he seemed sensible enough, it was plain that his sufferings had weakened his mind.

After Charles Gale, senior, had taken his departure, Agnes declared that she must not lose an hour without seeing her sister Mary. "Here," she said, "is one paper relating to the five hundred thousand dollars, and the other to the Irish property, that I am going to take with me; and Angeline's Ferry stock, which Mary shall give to her. I know Charles will let me do with it as I please."

"Yes, mother," said Charles, "the object of my life is to make you happy, and your sister is too much like you in all things to deny her anything; besides, it would be ungrateful to God, after all the blessings he has conferred on us, to be ungenerous to those who treated Mary so kindly."

"Excellent African sentiments!" exclaimed the traveler. "I am sure I heard King T—" but Agnes put her hand on his mouth, and the sentence remained unfinished.

Charles ordered two carriages, and, dividing the party so that he could have Flossy to himself, they started for the Morton residence. Before they left the house Charles Gale wrote the names

of Mr. and Mrs. James Gale, Mr. Charles Gale 2d, Miss Mary Gale, and Miss Carrolton on separate cards. They discussed among themselves what would be the best plan of breaking to Mary the news that Agnes and her husband and daughter were still in existence. They concluded that the proper way would be to send up their names at once, and the excitement would soonest be over.

When they rang the bell the servant informed them that Mrs. Morton could see no visitors. "Take these cards up," said Charles, "and see if she will not receive us."

Mrs. Morton and Angeline sat together in the boudoir, the former rocking herself to and fro, as was her usual habit of late. She did nothing now but sit with her hands before her, absorbed in thought, at times with tears rolling down her cheeks.

Mrs. Morton was greatly changed from the young-looking and handsome woman we met at the Vandeusen ball only a few months ago. She was pale as death, her hair had turned nearly white, her eyes were dimmed with weeping, and ten or fifteen years had apparently been added to her age. She looked like one on the rapid road to the grave.

Angeline was also greatly altered, and suffered for want of air and exercise—so necessary for young people. She was no longer a child, but had become a thoughtful woman.

When the servant knocked at the door, both mother and daughter started with surprise. It was seldom that any one called, and the servants were told to inform those that did that Mrs. Morton was unable to see visitors.

The waiter entered and said, "The party would send up their cards, mum, and wouldn't take No for an answer."

Angeline glanced at the cards and said, "People we don't know, mamma—Mr. and Mrs. James Gale, Miss Mary Gale, Mr. Charles Gale, and—oh! why, here's dear Flossy Carrolton. Who can these people be that are with her?"

Mrs. Morton was silent, and Angeline, looking up, saw her gasping for breath. Angeline ran to her mother, and in a moment she regained her speech. "Oh, what a cruel hoax!" she exclaimed, while she sobbed aloud.

"Tell them Mrs. Morton can not see them," said Angeline to the servant.

"No," said Mrs. Morton, "I will see who it is that dares to trifle with my feelings. Come with me, Angeline," and she proceeded down-stairs.

When Mrs. Morton and her daughter entered the parlor the visitors were standing before her portrait, by Sully, in which she was represented as clad in a rich maroon velvet, with lace collar and cuffs. The picture represented a person in the enjoyment of health and happiness. There was a quiet in that smiling face which spoke of life without care, abundant wealth, and troops of friends. She looked like a queen, and as the crowd that was wont to fill her saloons passed by that picture, they would say, "There is one person at least who wants nothing on earth to make her happy."

Agnes stood with her hands held out, as if to embrace her sister's picture. "My own dear, sweet Mary," she said; "the same dear sister that I knew so many years ago, so little changed, while I, with my pale face framed in snow-white hair, look old enough to be her mother. O Mary! thank God, you have escaped the sorrows that have fallen to the lot of your sister Agnes. She will not know me now, I look so old and changed."

"You are changed, Agnes," said her husband, "but to my eyes you are far more beautiful than that picture of your sister. Her picture reminds me of Cleopatra. Mary looks there as if she had never known misfortune, while your sweet face looks as if you had experienced sorrow such as you could never forget; but tears become you more than the diamonds Mary wears. I wouldn't change with Charles. My own sweet Agnes is the prettier. Don't you think I am right, Mary?"

"Aunt is very lovely," said Mary. "That picture does not give you an adequate idea of her. She treated me so kindly that I love her dearly."

"It has been a long time since we met," said the African traveler. "Mary, my darling, you must introduce Mungo Park to her; she won't recognize me with this white hair and beard. Ah, me! Africa is a bad place for the hair, especially where a man has been a slave, royal physician, crocodile-keeper, commander-in-chief of the army and navy, treasurer, prime minister, and finally king when Gumbo Chaff died."

"Never mind Gumbo Chaff just now," said Agnes, kissing him.

Mrs. Morton had entered the room so quietly that she was unobserved, and her eyes fell upon a lovely group. Flossy and Mary stood with their arms around each other's waists; Agnes and her husband were hand in hand; and the splendid-looking man whom she had known at Hawks' Roost as Vere Saye stood near them.

Was she dreaming, or was this another world into which she had

been suddenly carried to hold communion with the dead ? She put her finger on Angeline's lips to bid her to be quiet, and there she stood listening to the conversation. She recognized her sister at once. When she saw Agnes kiss her husband, she said to herself, "That is James Gale."

Mrs. Morton's heart beat almost to suffocation ; she seemed incapable of motion. Suddenly her strength returned, and, as Agnes turned around, she rushed forward and clasped her in her arms. "Thank God ! thank God !" she exclaimed, "the dead are alive again, and a thousand sorrows are lifted from my heart."

She wept and laughed by turns, and seemed as if she could never tire embracing her sister, who warmly returned her embrace. Then she took Agnes's face between her hands, and looked at it keenly. "The same sweet face," she said ; "only prettier than ever with that beautiful hair."

"Just what I said," remarked the African traveler.

Mrs. Morton had seen no one but Agnes, in whom all her thoughts were for the moment centered, but, at the sound of James's voice, she turned around and clasped him in her arms. "O James !" she exclaimed, "how changed ! yet how well I recognize you ! What does all this mean ? What have I done that God should give me so much happiness ?" and she wept again.

"It is a good while since we last met, Mary," said James. "I'm a new man now ; I'm Mungo Park, the great African traveler, and I'll tell you all my adventures by and by ; but talk to Agnes ; time enough to attend to me when you have done with her."

Mrs. Morton seemed to comprehend the condition of James's mind ; she looked at him pityingly, and then inquiringly at Agnes.

"He is all my care now," whispered Agnes. "God has mercifully lightened his sorrows. James is innocent as a child in some things, yet intelligent. I fear I love him too much ; but embrace my daughter Mary, dear sister."

Mrs. Morton took Mary in her arms and kissed her a hundred times. "My darling," she exclaimed, "I felt that I had a right to love you when first I met you at Hawks' Roost. Nature spoke to me through your eyes, which are those of your mother, and the more I knew you the more I loved you. There were some bright and some unhappy days, but I feel as if I never could be unhappy again now. All my troubles seem to have been lifted off my heart so strangely, and those whom I loved best on earth and thought to

be dead are alive once more. It all seems like a dream to me, and I do not yet understand it."

Then she turned to Flossy, saying, "You, dear Flossy, welcome to my arms," and she kissed her affectionately. "I loved your sweet, bright nature from the first. If it had been given me to choose, I could not have selected to meet people whom I so much love as I do those who are here to-day. Let us be thankful to God for all his blessings."

As to Angeline, she had almost kissed Mary away. "My dear old chummy," she said, "I thought we should never meet again. I have never smiled since you left me, and, but for dear mamma, I should have gone into the Convent of the Sacred Cross." And then Flossy came in for a share of her kisses and love.

"This must be a pleasant sight to you, Mr. Vere Saye, to witness the happy meeting of relatives so long parted," said Mrs. Morton. "I do not understand it all yet, and fear that I will wake and find it a dream."

"It will soon be explained, dear aunt," said Charles; "but have you not a word for your little nephew, who was stolen away so many years ago?"

"Father of Heaven!" she exclaimed, "more surprises and more joys! Will wonders never cease?" and she embraced her nephew affectionately. "I shall be so full of happiness soon that I shall have no room for more."

"Ah! you don't know, Mary, how much of that you can stand," said James. "I had many sorrows when I was in that blessed country Africa, but King Tom Tom—"

"Yes, darling," interrupted Agnes, "never mind that now. Come, here's an African picture—'The Oasis in the Desert'; see if you recognize it."

They all sat down in a circle with hands clasped, and there they sat and talked for hours, Mrs. Morton, by questioning, finding out little by little how all things came to pass. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "that Charles would come in—this would make him so blessed!"

"We have seen Charles," said James, "and he has done so well by us. He has doubled and doubled and quadrupled the money I sent him from China, and has laid up a fortune for us of two millions three hundred thousand dollars. I wanted him to keep it all for himself, but he won't have a cent, which is all wrong after the hard work and sacrifices he has made. He thinks he is a pauper;

but he don't know how we do things in that blessed country Africa. King Tom Tom—"

"Yes, darling," said Agnes, "but you forget about the deeds."

"Oh, yes," he replied, "here they are, Mary. Three deeds—one for five hundred thousand dollars in the English three per cents, one deed for the Irish estates, and a conveyance for the fifty thousand dollars Ferry stock for Angeline. There, Mary, I return them all to you ; you take charge of them. Women understand those things better than men. I intend that Agnes shall take charge of everything I own. Queen Tom Tom—"

"But tell Mary about the one hundred and fifty thousand dollars," said Agnes.

"Ah, yes," said James, "I forgot that. Well, Mary, your son and my daughter Mary get one hundred and fifty thousand dollars when they are married, which I hope will be soon. By the way, where is that young man ?"

Mrs. Morton had been sitting in a kind of dazed way, with the three papers in her hand, scarcely listening to her brother-in-law. After he had finished she raised her head and said, "Did Charles give up every cent he had made, and is he a pauper now ?"

"Yes," said James, "every cent, and he is a pauper, which is not right, for Charles did so well with the money I sent him ; he enriched us and ruined himself. But we don't do things that way over there in Africa. All that's yours, and something besides will go to Angeline when she is married."

"I could not accept a cent of this, my dear relatives," said Mrs. Morton. "Thank God, the heirs are found, and that Charles has given up everything. He promised me he would as soon as they could be found, and he has hunted so hard for them ! Thank God that he has found you all—but why is he not here ?"

Charles the younger smiled to himself when his aunt spoke of how hard his uncle had hunted for the heirs. His left breast felt pretty sore from the effect of the bullet—which was a heavy one—fired at him by his affectionate relative.

"Dear aunt," he said, "Uncle Charles has business that will keep him until five o'clock this evening, but you can't help receiving those deeds. It is merely returning part of what was given up. We have nothing more to do with them. Out of our abundance we can't see you want for anything ; you have no right to deprive

your children of anything for their benefit, and you certainly would not wish to deprive us of such a pleasure after so many years of sorrow."

"Will they not be the wages of sin?" she said, whispering to him. "Oh, no, I can't take them. Charles would not take them for fear he might be misjudged."

"Dear aunt," said her nephew, "will you let such a small matter as this bring a cloud between us after so long and painful a separation? Look at my father with his weakened intellect, which will come right with rest of mind, and see how happy it has made him to find himself able to do what he considers an act of justice. It is quite likely, if you persist in your determination, that it will fret him and cause him to fall back into a melancholy state, as he was when we first found him, and that would only bring us all unhappiness. So you must help us to restore my father, that he may be many years a blessing to us all. Recollect, dear aunt, this is a favor you are conferring upon us."

"I will see when Charles comes home. I can not decide myself. I will do what he says."

"That's right, my dear aunt; I'm sure he will do what I ask; it would be so unreasonable to do otherwise."

Here the traveler interrupted them. "Where is your naval hero, Harry?" he said. "I want to see him and know him. He would like to hear all about Africa, and the navy of King Tom Tom and his three hundred ships-of-war; and Queen Tom Tom's yacht, three hundred feet long, with a hundred rowers; and the canoe-races on Lake N'yanza, where the Queen resides in summer, and where two hundred canoes, one hundred feet long, enter the race for a prize of a stuffed crocodile with gold eyes, and where—" there was no knowing where he would have run on to if Agnes had not stopped his mouth with a kiss.

"You shall tell him all about it," she said; "but Mary must tell us where he is."

"He is in his room," Mrs. Morton answered; "he rarely goes out of the house. He is heart-broken, thinking he had lost Mary for ever."

Word was then sent up to Harry that his mother wished to see him in the parlor.

Harry, who was sitting gloomily in his room, was astonished on hearing that his mother was in the parlor after so long a seclusion in her own room. He went down quickly. On approaching the

door he heard merry voices and laughter—sounds that had not lately been heard in the Morton house.

When he opened the door, and looked at the scene before him, he had eyes but for one object. He was not master of himself, and before he knew what he was about he had Mary in his arms and pressing her to his breast.

The traveler was delighted at the scene. "That's just the way they do in Africa, my boy; people are the same the world over, only there they rub noses together." Then for the first time Harry noticed that there was some one else in the room.

"Come, Harry," said his mother, "and embrace your Aunt Agnes and Uncle James, whom you have heard me talk so much about, who were dead to us once, and are alive again. When you hear all about them, you will say, 'Verily, truth is stranger than fiction.'" Harry was now embraced by both uncle and aunt.

"There she is," said James, pointing to Mary; "go and take her—she is yours, and a sweeter or more dutiful daughter never lived; there, go, and rub noses to your heart's content!"

Harry was so delighted to get back to Mary that he did not notice Charles, but he suddenly stopped, and said, "Why, Vere Saye, you here?" and held out his hand.

"Vere Saye no longer," the other said, "but your cousin, Charles Gale."

Then Harry recognized Flossy, but he did not understand a bit of it all. He greeted Flossy warmly, and then went after Mary. The latter had taken Angeline in her lap, and had put her face close to hers to hide her blushes. In all her experience Harry had never taken such a liberty. "I think," she said to Angeline, "that he might have waited a little while until we were alone; it was not nice of him!"

Nevertheless, she soon forgave him, and became as chatty as possible, and Harry thought she looked lovelier than ever.

Mrs. Morton insisted that they should stay with her for a time, but Charles, who had charge of them, said "No," and he whispered to Mrs. Morton, "You will want to talk to your husband about a number of matters, and it is better for the present that you should be alone with him. Besides, we know so little what my father's mental condition is we don't want to expose him to any excitement. I have duties, too, that require me to return to-night, and I want to take them all back with me. I shall take a house immediately in the city, and we will see one another every day."

Mrs. Morton saw the wisdom of her nephew's remarks, and acquiesced in his recommendations. She had lunch prepared for them, and they spent a joyous hour over the table, where the champagne-corks popped, and laughter went around as it was wont to do in olden times in the Morton house.

Charles insisted on taking Harry back with him, and Mary insisted on taking Angeline. Mrs. Morton was too happy to give her darling a little recreation and fresh air, and she agreed to Angeline's going. Her mother was looking so happy now that Angeline did not mind leaving her; and so, after a great deal of love and embracing, and promises to return soon, this happy party started off for the sloop and re-embarked for what was at present their home. Angeline was the same old Patch. A mountain of care had been taken off her mind. She knew there was some great mystery going on, which, no doubt, she would know in time. And then she was so perfectly fascinated with her rather queer old uncle and her beautiful aunt, who were so like lovers, and sat constantly by themselves, holding each other's hands. Angeline felt sometimes that she was in the way, but she insisted on having Mary all to herself, and Charles had to take such crumbs of comfort as he could get. There never was a party better suited; each had the one they loved at their side. As the Frenchman said, *Que voulez-vous?*

It was a bright moonlight night as they sailed down New York Bay. The weather was splendid, the wind fair, and the vessel slipped over the water, scarcely making a ripple.

In six hours the sloop was at her old anchorage.

Charles sent to the nearest farm-house for a four-horse Jersey wagon with six seats, and they rattled over the smooth road at the rate of ten miles an hour, Harry insisting that Mary should start a glee for them, and stir up the farmers as they rode along.

The traveler enjoyed it, for it reminded him, he said, of that blessed country Africa, where he used to ride with Queen Tom Tom on a crocodile's skin, with four rhinoceroses in harness and twelve out-riders on camelopards, making fourteen miles an hour. "I'll tell you all about it, Harry, after supper," he said.

"But you know, darling, you promised me to retire early to-night," said Agnes. "We are not so young as we were once, and can't stand this sitting up late."

"I don't care whether we are young or old," said James. "I know one thing, Agnes: none of those I have seen can hold a candle to you for beauty. You are prettier than you were when I first

knew you. Ah ! visions of those times and shadowy phantoms of days of eternal love fill my mind and memory. It seems to all come back to me like the old songs my mother used to sing me to sleep with. I remember the tolling of our village church-bell on Sunday mornings. It seems to me as if I had gone through a great deal of sorrow, Agnes, and what has become of it ? It must be your voice that drives away sad memories. I stayed too long away from you in that blessed country. I ought to have come home and taken you back with me ; you would have been first lady of honor to Queen Tom Tom and—"

"Here's our candle, darling," interrupted Agnes. "These young folks don't want us any longer. You will tell me all about the Queen when we get up-stairs." Then the traveler kissed all the girls, and kissed Angeline a dozen times. "You remind me of your aunt when she was young," he said, "but you will never equal her in beauty, though you have the face of an angel ; good-night all—in Africa—"

"Yes, darling," interrupted Agnes as she closed the door after him and led him up-stairs.

Next morning at breakfast Charles said, "I have a proposition to make, and it is this : In this house we have all found happiness, and have ended our sorrows. I say let us buy it, and make it a pleasant summer resort from the heat of New York." At this all clapped their hands and agreed. Then they discussed different names for the place, and the traveler proposed that the name should be "'Content,' for this was the first spot where after twenty-two years I found content and my Agnes." So Mr. Holmes was found, a bargain concluded, and the place, as improved, is to-day one of the most lovely spots on the New Jersey coast.

Mr. Morton went home in the evening in very low spirits. This had been a terrible day to him ; all the concentrated agony of the rest of his life could not equal the pain and humiliation he had been subjected to this day.

He felt obliged to go home and face his wife, but it had never struck him that those who had forced him to relinquish every cent he had in the world would go to his house and see his wife, knowing how complete a pauper they had made her. Even the house they lived in was not theirs, and he would have to go off into the world somewhere where he was not known and begin life anew.

He wished that his bullet had found his nephew's heart, and

then he would not have been troubled any more. He could easily have satisfied the public that he had killed the intruder in self-defense, but it was too late now to repine ; the evil was done, and he was a pauper in the fullest sense of the word.

Morton had thought at times that a day might come when he would be obliged to flee, and he had invested money abroad to enable him to live in ease in case he was called upon to give up his property in America. But they had even taken this from him. His brother, it is true, had offered to divide, but he soon discovered that his intellect was impaired, and he knew that his nephew, a shrewd, strong man, had entire control of the whole matter, and would permit nothing of the kind.

In this despondent mood Morton reached his home. As he entered the parlor he was clasped in his wife's arms. It was the first sign of joy he had witnessed in Mrs. Morton for several months, and he wondered what had caused this ebullition of spirits ; but his wife soon made him understand. "Oh !" said she, "I have seen them all, and this has been one of the happiest days of my life. Doesn't Agnes look beautiful ? and then, after all, Mary belonged to me. Poor James's grief and long-continued sorrow have unsettled him somewhat, but I rather think Agnes will be able to look after him ; she loves him as she did in her youth—just as I love you, Charles."

"And do you really love me ?" he inquired. "Did you never doubt me ? Did your love never fall away from me ?"

"Never !" she replied ; "but, Charles, what wonderful things have happened ! The hand of God alone could have brought us all together again. And you have redeemed your promise to me, and found them and given up everything."

"Yes, everything," he said. He did not tell her how little volition there was on his part in the matter. "Are you satisfied, Mary ?" he said. "It was a hard trial, but if you are satisfied with me it is all I care for. Life has ended for me, and I must go into obscurity."

"Why should you do that, Charles ?" she inquired ; "the world is still open to you. You can go on with your business. You have enough to live comfortably, even luxuriously, on."

"Mary," he said, taking her hand, "I am a pauper in the extremest sense of the word. I own nothing. I have given up everything, as you wished."

"Thank God !" said his wife, "and you shall receive your

reward. See, here are five hundred thousand dollars' worth of English three per cents, returned you as the part due you for the care of the original money. Here are your Irish estates returned to you. Here is the fifty thousand dollars in Ferry stock I have heard you say pays thirty per cent; this is secured to Angeline. One hundred and fifty thousand dollars is to be secured to Mary the day she and Harry are married, and before our dear relatives left the city, notwithstanding they had so little time, they had a deed of gift made out conveying this house and the furniture to me, to do with as I please. I don't think, darling, this looks much like being paupers. I think we could worry along on three quarters of a million, for that is about the amount that will come to us all."

"Did Charles Gale do all this after what he knows?" exclaimed Mr. Morton. "God has made his soul as noble as his form; he has indeed heaped hot coals upon my head, for I know that it is Charles Gale's hand that has done it all, and yet I doubted him, but only because I was incapable of judging him. He is really one of God's noblest works—an honest man. Darling," he said, presently, "are you satisfied to lie under such heavy obligations to your relatives—obligations that may humiliate you?"

"Yes," she replied, "I am. I would not, for all the world, pain them by a refusal. Their gift exonerates you in the eyes of the world in case any ill-natured people should desire to make remarks, for it must become known that your great wealth has gone to your brother and his family."

"I see," he said, "you argue well and justly. My hopes, like withered leaves, had fallen to the ground, and I feel them rise again. I trust that the sweet waters of life may spring once more and bedew my path. I can not hope to bury the memory of the past; it is sunk in a deep and transparent lake ever before my eyes, and whenever I look therein I see its depths are burned black with my sins. Thank God! I shall have your love to cheer me on through life. Had I lost that, life would have been drear indeed. When I see, darling, such nobility of soul in those who have cause to complain of me, I look into my heart and acknowledge that the fresh springs of purity implanted in my breast by my parents have been emptied into the parched deserts of sin. But we will begin life anew. We will go abroad for a time and get some rest. You need change of scene; the last few months have brought the marks of age on your face, and every gray thread that I see in your once beautiful hair causes me a pang I can not describe.

"My plan now is that the bank shall pass over to my brother under the name of Gale & Son ; and may they prosper in their undertakings, and may they forgive me with all their hearts !"

Three days after, an announcement appeared in the "Evening Post" as follows :

"We regret to learn that the ill-health of the eminent and esteemed banker, Mr. Charles Morton, will oblige him to give up business for a time. He will go to Europe, where he will remain until his health is entirely restored. He will reside part of the time on his Irish estates, and will travel over the Continent. The bank will be carried on by relatives of Mr. Morton, under the name of Morton & Gale. We wish Mr. Morton a pleasant voyage, and a happy return to his country, entirely restored to health."

This was inserted in the "Post" by Charles Gale the younger. He had determined to bury every sign of resentment for the treatment of his mother and sister. They had all been so providentially brought together again that Charles had become a confirmed convert to Mr. Lindsay's theory, viz.: "There is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will."

He did not think it was his business to punish where a man had apparently shown penitence and a desire to make amends for his sins, and he thought it wise not to let the world know that there were differences between members of the family. "A house divided against itself can not stand," is an axiom as old as civilization, and it was his father and mother's fixed principle that relatives should forgive the deepest injuries.

The Mortons concluded that it would be best to retain their borrowed name until circumstances should enable them to resume their own, and to avoid remarks on the part of the public.

They commenced at once making preparations for departure. As the Morton mansion was a very large one, Agnes and James and the young people determined to occupy it until they could provide a house of their own. While it was being prepared for their reception they could live at Holmes's farm.

It was also determined that Harry Morton should resign from the navy and become a partner with his cousin Charles in the banking house, and, after a time, marry his cousin Mary.

It never could be accurately ascertained how James Gale had been saved from drowning after it was reported he had been lost at sea.

From his own account, which varied at different times, it ap-

pears the ship broached to and lost her foremast in the gale, as was reported at the time, and the captain and many of her crew were washed overboard by the sea. James Gale stated that the mate kept the ship before the sea for four days, running due east, at the end of which time they made the coast of Africa, south of the Congo River, where the ship went ashore in the breakers, and after twenty-four hours went to pieces, only one other person besides himself reaching the shore.

These two were captured as soon as they landed and sold as slaves far in the interior of the country. Their captors took them up a large river, passing many towns and rapids, where the canoes had to be carried by land around the falls. After five or six months they entered a large lake, and, in the course of two years, they came to other lakes, where they were often out of sight of land.

James Gale stated that he was obliged to labor at the oar, and was exposed to great hardships, and finally became ill, when there followed two or three years of his life of which he had no recollection whatever. His family supposed he had lost his reason from mental affliction.

At times he would relate accounts of his journeys over wide deserts and extensive jungles, and would tell of the wonderful animals he had seen, in particular of a large green monkey that could talk.

Again he would ramble off to the subject of the fifty kings with whom he dined, and how he himself was raised to the royal dignity on the decease of the lamented King Gumbo Chaff.

Every day he told some new anecdote of King Tom Tom and his Queen. The former, he said, had died after many years of close friendship with him, leaving him in charge of the Queen's crocodiles. The Queen set him up in great state in a crocodile-skin carriage, drawn by four rhinoceroses, with twelve out-riders on camelopards, to find his home. He traveled through many kingdoms, where kings and queens paid homage to him as a holy man, and, after journeying for eighteen months, he awoke one morning and found his escort had left him alone in a forest, where some natives found him, half starved, and brought him to the Cape of Good Hope.

The captain of the *Fame* stated that he had found him wandering about Cape Town, somewhat out of his mind, and representing himself as Mungo Park, the celebrated traveler. Out of compassion, the captain gave him passage to the United States.

It is needless to state that the captain of the *Fame* was amply rewarded for his kindness to the old traveler.

CHAPTER LVII.

AN ABDUCTION.

THE banking-house of Morton & Gale had been in operation for three months, and had so far enjoyed public confidence that it retained all its old customers, and had more business than when the bank was under the old management. Charles Gale, while actual head of the bank, had also his old position with the chief of police, for that functionary, during the short absence of his assistant, had not succeeded so well, and urged "Dare," as he continued to call him, to still "run the machine," which the latter consented to do.

The old cashier of Morton, in whom the public had confidence, was still at his post, and Charles could choose his own time to be absent from the bank. The chief of police visited him at the bank without suspicion, and conferred with him in the back room.

Charles's father took great pride in being considered the nominal head of the firm, and he was often anxious to go to the bank to see how matters were going on. "For," said he to Agnes, "Charles is so young a man for such an important trust that it is well I should advise with him now and then."

A short experience had shown Agnes that her husband did not exhibit any improvement in his mental faculties. He remained about the same, although the effect of new scenes upon him was to prevent his referring so often to King and Queen Tom Tom.

It was a beautiful sight to see this sweet woman watching over her "invalid," as she called him, smoothing the pillow in his easy-chair, or reading the newspapers to him.

James had forgotten in a measure how to read, or at least reading was very difficult for him; and the physicians objected to his doing anything likely to tax the brain.

Agnes would sit and play checkers with him all day, which he used to say was King Tom Tom's favorite game; and no doubt he had played the game a good deal with some one, for he was very expert, no one being able to beat him.

Sometimes he would draw a check for some fabulous sum and present it to Agnes, saying, "Here, darling, the wife of Mungo Park, the great traveler and keeper of Queen Tom Tom's crocodiles, must not want for pocket-money." Agnes would thank him with as much fervor as if it were a real transaction.

James would often talk of cutting off his long hair and beard. "No, darling," Agnes would say, "every gray hair is a tribute to me, as mine is to you. Let us take these mementos of each other with us to the grave. Those gray hairs are as pleasant to me as the golden leaves in autumn. When I look on them, dreams of youth come back again, and I see you as you used to be in all the vigor of manhood, and with your beautiful hair like grain just ripening in the sun."

"That's very pretty, Agnes," James would say. "I would not cut my hair for the world, any more than I would let you cut yours; besides, Queen Tom Tom admired it so much, and it was on that account I was made prime minister."

James would often get into fits of musing and talk to himself in some unknown language, which seemed to give him great comfort. Unless the musings lasted too long he was not disturbed on these occasions, when Agnes would remark, "I'm getting jealous of Queen Tom Tom." "You need not," he would say. "I was only talking to my crocodiles; but she was a fine woman, weighed four hundred pounds, and danced like a gazelle."

"Agnes," he said, one day, after a fit of musing, "why don't our other boy come home? we haven't met for a long time. I want him to come and be a partner with Charles in the bank. I am getting old now, and I must gather my children around me."

Agnes had often expressed the same wish to Charles, but he would answer, "James will come in good time. He can't leave his affairs; he is engaged in some important business;" or make some other excuse to satisfy her.

One evening when at the farm, and the family were sitting around the fireside, Agnes said, "Charles, both your father and myself are anxious to see James once more before we die. Won't you write for him to come home, or else we may not live to see him?"

Charles laughed heartily at this. "Dear mother," he said, kissing her, "I don't know that I ever saw a heartier or younger looking pair, barring your white hair. Your hearts are as young as they were twenty-five years ago. As to father, he looks like a sturdy oak, with the snows of winter resting on its branches."

"Yes, Charles, my boy," said the traveler, "I once threw King Gumbo Chaff over my head in a wrestling match, and was made king when he died."

"I have been thinking of James for some time," Charles re-

sumed, "and, if Harry will take care of the bank while I am absent, I will go and see if I can find him. He travels a great deal, and is never long enough in one place for me to know where to write to him."

"Of course Harry will do that," said the traveler, "and he will always have my assistance and experience to guide him. Mary would be delighted with a trip abroad, and you can take her to that blessed country Africa. Perhaps she will meet Queen Tom Tom there, and she—"

"Yes, darling," interrupted Agnes, "Charles will go, I am sure. Harry can manage the bank with the assistance of the cashier. If they need advice they will, of course, call on you."

Charles Gale had been corresponding with persons in all parts of Europe in the endeavor to obtain information of his brother's whereabouts. He had to be careful in making inquiry for fear of arousing suspicions, but at last he got a clew to the effect that his brother was leading a roving life, and was often accompanied by a woman who was supposed to be his wife.

It seems that a person named von Beust, an Austrian, who corresponded to the description of the person for whom Charles inquired, came to Monaco in a large schooner carrying the Austrian flag. Charles had no doubt that this was his brother in one of his disguises, in which he was as great an adept as himself.

It was arranged that Flossy should remain with James and Agnes during Charles's absence, and, on the return of the travelers, a double wedding was to take place, in which Charles and Flossy, Harry and Mary, would play the principal parts.

Charles Gale was at this moment so much engaged in making preparations to move the family to the city from "Content Farm" that he was absent a great portion of the time, and Harry was so busy in the bank that he could not leave the city, so that neither of them could visit the farm more than once a week. The African traveler and a laborer were the only men about the place, but no apprehensions existed in the minds of any one, and no further guards were considered necessary. Harry had, however, taken down the two dogs, and the girls were strictly enjoined never to stir out without them.

They had remained in the house four days, during a spell of rainy weather, but on the fifth day Flossy proposed a walk.

Mary had been ill one day and confined to her room, and felt obliged to decline going out. "But, Flossy," she said, "you are

suffering for the want of fresh air, and the roses are leaving your cheeks. You must take the dogs and go out for a stroll."

"I would like it so much," said Flossy, "but first let me ask your mother." And she went to Agnes, who could see no objections to the arrangement, provided Flossy took the dogs with her, which were faithful animals, and would not leave her side. "Don't go far, darling," said Agnes, "and avoid the beach." And, kissing her, Flossy started out as merry as a cricket.

She had been gone about half an hour when two shots were heard in quick succession, which made the family start. Pistol-shots were unusual, but the traveler accounted for them by saying there was a party that morning shooting along the beach, where snipe were in great abundance.

This quieted them all for the moment, although Agnes remarked that the sound seemed to come from the direction of Shrewsbury River.

"Let us go out and look Flossy up," said the traveler; but, as Mary was not well and could not leave the house, some moments were lost in discussing how the two could leave her behind. Mary was brave and had no apprehensions regarding Flossy, and was sure no damage could have come to her while those two dogs were with her.

"Go," she said, "and get some fresh air; it will do you both good to take a walk. You will meet Flossy coming home."

After a good deal of care in putting on their wraps, Agnes and the traveler started, the old man leaning tenderly on her arm.

It was a crisp morning, and they set forth anticipating no danger. But in about ten minutes after leaving the house they saw one of the dogs running rapidly toward them with something in his mouth.

Even then they saw nothing to be frightened at, for the animals often gamboled before the girls, and chased each other along the road.

In a minute more the dog was at their side, and threw himself down at their feet, whining piteously. In his mouth he carried a bloody pocket-handkerchief, which it was evident belonged to Flossy.

All the animal's fore-shoulders were covered with blood, and, on examination, he proved to have been shot through the top of the neck, the blood from the wound flowing profusely.

"Great Heavens! Agnes," exclaimed her husband, "something

has happened to Flossy. Charles will never forgive me for letting her go out alone ; but come, let us go and rescue her."

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed Agnes, "can there be other woes in store for us? But come, darling, let us go on and see if anything has happened to Flossy." They hurried onward as rapidly as they could, the faithful dog going ahead and looking back at them from time to time, as if asking them to follow him.

It was full half an hour before their journey terminated, and then, on turning the corner of the road, the dog suddenly raised his head and started off on a full run until he reached a point where something black lay in a heap, and there he stood, uttering the most heart-rending howls.

Agnes and her husband hurried on, and when they reached the spot they both nearly fainted with alarm and bewilderment. It required all the strength her husband possessed to keep Agnes from falling to the ground. There, before their eyes, lay the other dog stiff in death—shot through the heart. His eyes were still open and wore an angry look, while his teeth were tightly closed on a piece of cloth that had been torn from a man's coat-sleeve. Under his body lay a wide-awake black hat.

Agnes burst into a flood of tears. Every muscle and nerve in her body seemed to be convulsed. "James! James!" she cried, "is there to be no peace for us? Is all our new-found happiness to be dashed to the ground by some fresh adversity? What will become of us? This will kill poor Charles, he loved the child so; and we, who were intrusted with his treasure, to let her go out, even with the dogs to guard her!"

"They don't do these things in Africa, Agnes. Let us go back to that blessed country when we find Flossy, and leave this murderous land. They will welcome us there."

"Oh! let us push on," said Agnes, "and see if we can find Flossy. We may overtake her abductors yet, and pay them any ransom they may ask." Agnes did not once think of danger to herself and husband, nor remember the many perils she had run during her life while hiding from the deadly foe that had threatened to kill her and her daughter. She thought only of saving Flossy.

"Come," said her companion, "we will rescue her, or perish with her." They pushed on the main road toward Shrewsbury River as fast as their trembling steps could carry them.

It was quite an hour before they arrived at the bank of the river, but they could discover no signs whatever of Flossy. All they could

see was a sloop, half a mile off from the beach, getting under way. Two or three men were hoisting the sails, while two others were hoisting up the boat, and then in an instant the jib was run up, the sloop fell off before the wind, and, while one could count ten, she was flying off with a spanking breeze, running out of the inlet and along Sandy Hook beach.

"The mystery lies in that sloop, Agnes," said her husband, "and we can't fathom it. Thank God! there were no sloops in Africa."

Agnes sat down on the sand and almost sobbed her heart away, while the tears ran down her husband's cheeks at witnessing her misery. "Poor child! poor child!" he said, "trust in the God who so miraculously saved us. Would that we were all in Africa!"

There was nothing more to do. It was evident that Flossy had been abducted by some one and carried on board the sloop; and they slowly took their way back to the house, the wounded dog following on behind them with his head to the ground, turning now and then to look back toward his dead companion, and whining piteously. They could not find words to tell Mary of the calamity that had overtaken them, but she soon discovered the truth, and mingled her tears with theirs.

No time was to be lost. The moments were flying away, while they should be doing something to rescue Flossy. They sent the gardener at once to a fisherman they knew, who came as soon as possible. They told him the circumstances of Flossy's abduction, and begged him to help them get a note to Charles Gale in New York. The kind-hearted man volunteered to take the letter himself in a large double spritsail fishing-boat manned with four men besides himself.

A note was hurriedly written, giving Charles Gale an account of all that had happened, and the fisherman started at meridian on his mission. As the wind was fair, he calculated that he would deliver the note by six o'clock in the evening.

Meanwhile the bereaved family gave way to their tears, and could not be comforted. For some things there is no comfort to be found, and this was one of them. The abduction was so unexpected, so seemingly without purpose, that it bewildered them. What hidden enemy could sweet Flossy have—she whom every one seemed to love, and who had a kind word for everybody she met? It was wholly inexplicable.

That evening at six o'clock Charles Gale was sitting in the din-

ing-room of Mr. Morton's house, regaling himself with a cigar, when the fisherman knocked at the front door and aroused him from his reverie.

He arose, and, going to the door, was rather surprised to find a fisherman with a note. He took it and read it without a muscle of his face moving; he turned a shade paler, but that was all.

"Thank you!" said he to the man; "tell my family that I will attend to it, and here are fifty dollars for your trouble. Go back to-night, and deliver my message the moment you arrive at Shrewsbury River."

The fisherman looked at Charles in astonishment. He knew that Charles was the lover of the pretty girl that had been abducted, and he expected to see some intense emotion exhibited, but he saw none. He saw an eye showing cool determination, and a mien that no misfortune could throw out of balance.

Charles Gale pulled the bell, and when the servant answered it he said, "Send the boy here."—"This is that scoundrel Brice's work," he muttered when alone. "He told me he would spoil my life before he was done, and he has taken a sure way to do it. O Flossy! Flossy!" he cried, "I will find you if I have to travel the world over and wade through rivers of blood."

When Chic came in Charles was quite cool again. "Go at once," he said, "and tell Belette and Tormenteur to come to me immediately."

Chic departed on his errand, and in an hour the two detectives arrived. Charles gave them all the points to find his darling he deemed necessary. "Set the whole force to work," he said, "and don't fail."

In two hours the detectives returned. They had ascertained that Brice had sailed that afternoon in the packet-ship Siddons for Havre, under the name of Carrolton. His name was on the books at the office, but there was no evidence of any female having gone with him.

"Ah! I see," exclaimed Charles Gale, "he has enticed the poor child to go with him, and is off for Europe. He dare not go to England; he will go to the Continent. The greater reason why I must hurry after him."

He told the detectives to keep up their researches, and, packing his portmanteau, he went on board of his sloop and proceeded to Content Farm, where he arrived at ten o'clock the next morning.

When he reached the house he found the family in a very dis-

tressed condition, but his manly bearing soon composed them. "Fear not, my dear parents," he said, taking a hand of each, "I will bring Flossy back to you in all her loveliness and beauty. But I must lose no time, and must sail for Liverpool day after to-morrow in the Henry Clay. Mary must go with me. She is necessary in case I find Flossy, and it will do her good to see the world. I will see that you are protected in my absence, and will leave two good men to guard you."

The old people agreed to all his propositions, for they were eager to have him get possession of dear Flossy again. It was arranged that the family should go up to town that day, take up their residence at Mr. Morton's house under Harry's care, and bid good-by to the travelers on board the packet.

The day came, and Charles Gale with his party, including Chic, who was to go with him, went on board the packet.

The hour came to say good-by, and, after many kisses and hearty hand-shakings, the old people prepared to go on shore, accompanied by Harry Morton, who was almost heart-broken at parting with Mary even for the short time that the travelers proposed to remain abroad. The old African traveler was the only one that seemed to have any spirits left in him. He was so anxious to see his son James, and to have Flossy returned to him, that he was in a hurry to see his children off. The last thing he did was to present Mary with another valuable stone, which, he said, was given to him by Queen Tom Tom for curing her of a toothache. "I have never had it cut," he said, "as the lapidaries in Africa are not so good as in this country and in Europe, but they are far more honest. Do you have it cut and set when you get over the water, and," drawing himself up proudly, "draw upon the banking house of Morton & Gale for the expense."

As the Henry Clay hoisted her sails Harry and the old people stood upon the wharf waving their handkerchiefs. The ship cast seaward, and in a few moments was under a cloud of canvas, standing down the bay with a fresh and fair wind.

Let us pass over the events of this voyage. It was, like many others of its kind, rough and disagreeable. The wind blew fiercely from the N. W., the seas ran high, and Mary came on deck only twice to see the ocean in all its angry majesty.

The captain was a bold sailor, and carried canvas very hard. Sails were often split into ribbons, but others were sent aloft by the hardy sailors, and the brave craft never lost a minute on her voyage.

Charles Gale formed the acquaintance of the captain, and made him a confidant of the object of his voyage as far as Flossy was concerned. This was an additional stimulus to press the ship with canvas.

On the eighteenth day they arrived off the channel, and a few hours later took a pilot and proceeded to Liverpool, where Charles, Mary, and Chic landed next morning.

The next step was to go to Dover, cross the channel to Calais, and thence proceed to Havre. At Havre Charles ascertained that the ship in which Brice had sailed had not arrived, and he waited patiently until she came in. She arrived the next day, having been detained over her time by the springing of her foretop-mast, which, fortunately for Charles, gave him the opportunity he desired.

He had gone to the American Consul and stated his errand to him, and that gentleman, sympathizing with him in the case, procured letters of arrest against Brice, so that Charles went to the landing-place with officers ready to lay hands on him as soon as he landed.

Brice was among the first passengers to land. Charles walked directly up to him and, facing him, said, "Brice, or Carrolton, or whatever your name is, I arrest you for the abduction of Flossy Carrolton. Where is she?"—for Flossy was not with him.

Brice was astonished at first, but soon recovered his coolness. "Thank Heaven and the devil!" he said, "I am out of your reach here. D—n you and your letters of arrest. I know nothing of Flossy, and haven't seen her since I parted with her in your presence. Move out of my way!"

At that moment there were six or eight *gens d'armes* closing about Brice, and but for this Charles might have been obliged to use force, as he did once before. Discretion being the better part of valor, Brice concluded not to resist the authorities. The prisoner was taken before the American Consul, and then to the magistrate's office, where he made affidavit that he knew nothing of the missing girl—that he had been two days on board the ship before she sailed, and that no female was on board with him. This statement was corroborated by the captain and officers of the ship.

Charles Gale was now in despair. He found that he was on the wrong track, and, though he felt sure that Brice was at the bottom of Flossy's abduction, he knew that she must still be in America if alive, and he could only trust to the zeal and energy of Belette and Tormenteur, to whom he had given clear instructions to follow up

the case. He even hoped that by this time she might be with his parents again.

Notwithstanding that Brice had apparently cleared himself of the charge of abduction, Charles Gale decided to hold him a few days longer, and, at the American Consul's request, the magistrate placed him under charge of the police, but not in close confinement.

Charles Gale then wrote to the president of the Liverpool Bank, and gave him a full account of Brice and of his performances in America. The bank authorities immediately had a requisition made on the French authorities to deliver up the malefactor. They sent over persons and papers to prove all the charges against him, and Brice was finally carried prisoner to England.

There was nothing else for Charles Gale to do but to go in pursuit of his brother, and to wait patiently for at least fifty days before he could receive an answer to his letter from the United States. As this would be a long and tedious time to one so situated, he determined to take his sister to Paris and let her see something of the great capital.

Mary, it was true, was sad and despondent, but she was young, and hopeful of a happy ending to all their troubles, and hence she gladly agreed to her brother's proposal to visit Paris.

Sixty days brought them letters from home. Flossy had not been found, but one of the crew of the sloop had been arrested, and he gave evidence that the girl was still living, and well when he last saw her; and that the person who had abducted her meant to do her no injury, but had taken her off, witness did not know where. Charles was further informed that all the detective force of New York were engaged in the search for her, and all felt sure that she would soon be found.

He had to rest satisfied with this information. He knew that if Belette and Tormenteur could not find her no one could. His presence at home was not absolutely necessary, as he could write instructions from day to day, and perhaps point out some missing clew.

Three months had now passed away, and Charles Gale determined to go in pursuit of his brother, of whom he believed he had heard indirectly several times.

Before leaving Paris, Charles said to Mary, "You know, sister, that I must now go in search of brother James. To be successful, I must travel incog. The person I am looking for must not know

either you or me, and even Chic, in whom I place great dependence, must be disguised. So, my dear, you must for a short time change that pretty face of yours. We are in Paris, where the necessary changes can be made in one's appearance to defy detection. You can take your choice—what kind of beauty will you be?"

"O Charles!" she replied, "this will be lovely. I will be a blonde, with dark chestnut eyes and dark eyebrows."

"You foolish little thing!" he said, "you are as vain as the vainest. With blonde hair, and an inch and a half to your boot-heels, I will defy any one to know you. You will have to pass for an old man's daughter, for that of an old man is the only disguise I can securely wear. I should be recognized in any other."

"It will all be lovely!" exclaimed Mary. "I have so wished always that I was a blonde. I shall look lovely, I know, and I only wish Harry could see me."

"You vain little thing, you never could be lovelier than you are now, and I am quite sure that if the people at Monaco, where we are going, could see you as you are, the men would all go wild about you, and the women look upon you with envy. I think it is a wise precaution to hide your face, for there is nothing prettier on this side of the Atlantic."

"You foolish old brother!" cried Mary, "you are too partial to me. I think I'll tease the life out of you, and get you jealous."

"There is one safeguard I have, Mary," said Charles, "and that is my size. These Frenchmen and Italians always look at a man's fist before they ogle his daughter, and my limbs, I am sure, will keep an army of these fellows from looking at you even. But," he continued, "we must leave Paris disguised, so that our appearance will correspond with our descriptions on our passports. We will go to the disguisers to-night, obtain our passports to-morrow, and start on our journey. We will have our own private coach and four horses, stop when we please and where we please, and arrive at our destination at the most pleasant part of the season."

"Oh, it will be lovely!" said Mary; "but I don't like your being an old man, Charles, for they will think I am your youngest daughter, and that you have a dozen more at home."

"No, dear," he said, "I will take care to tell every one that you are the only daughter, and have two hundred thousand dollars of your own, but that it is too late for them to get it, as you are engaged."

The next day they started for Monaco.

CHAPTER LVIII.

AT MONACO.

It was a gala night at Monte Carlo. All the saloons were open, and the large glass chandeliers were lighted with a thousand candles.

A band of a hundred instruments discoursed sweet music, the waiters in the restaurant ran to and fro, and the popping of corks from champagne-bottles was heard in all directions. The hum of voices, the merry sounds of laughter, the odd mixture of all nationalities, the gorgeous dressing, made a scene ever to be remembered by one who had never seen it before.

There were at least fifteen hundred people in the building that night; many attracted by the novelty and the music, others to enjoy the viands served up by the best cooks in Europe, and to partake of the delicious wines.

The gambling saloon was filled to overflowing. Heavy betting was going on, principally by Russians, who had large piles of gold before them, and were playing with varied fortune, sometimes, in their deep, guttural language, cursing their luck, and again bursting out with loud exclamations of pleasure when fortune smiled upon them.

At the table, among these heavy-betting foreigners, sat a beautiful woman, with light hair, and heavily rouged. Why she should have resorted to this practice to add to her charms no one could imagine. She was beautiful enough to satisfy the most ardent imagination. There was not a feature of her face that was not faultless. Her dress was exquisite, and the ten-thousand-dollar *solitaires* which she wore in her tiny ears paled before the flashing of her lustrous eyes. At her back stood, at a little distance, a waiter with a bottle of champagne *frappé*, and every ten minutes she called, "*Garçon!*" and was helped liberally to the cooling beverage.

She was betting heavily, and losing as fast as she put down her money. She was also betting recklessly, and did not seem to mind losing; for, when the *croupier* would rake in her gold, she would laugh, and exclaim, "*N'importe!* von Beust has a mine that never fails."

At last her bets became so heavy, and so much more so than the other foreigners, that all stopped for a time to look at *La belle Autrichienne*.

She would lose thousands and coolly drink her champagne, while the spectators gazed at her rapturously and cried "Bravo!" "*Quelle femme!*" said one; "*Une femme miraculeuse!*" said another; "*Ah, mon Dieu, quelle héroïne!*" said a third—all of which seemed to gratify her vanity and stimulate her desire to play heavier. She had lost nearly all the evening, and the lookers-on were wondering when her mine of gold would be exhausted. She had lost seven times in succession, when she beckoned to a man standing near the door, who came forward and placed at her right hand a large parcel of notes. With this she made her bet.

She had lost up to this time five hundred thousand francs, and had borne the loss with perfect equanimity.

She had placed all her money on the red. The wheel was turned, but no one knew what the amount was she had on the table. They knew it was large, and watched with breathless anxiety to see what the result would be.

The chances were on her side, as the red had lost constantly that night. When the *croupier* announced that the red had won there was a burst of applause. "How much?" inquired the banker as he counted the money, and looked a little surprised at the amount.

"Six million francs," was the triumphant reply.

"Ah," said the banker, "you have won largely, and are ahead over five million francs. It is not many people who play with such judgment; but you will lose it all. The bank will be sure to win it back. We love to see ladies win, because they play for the excitement, and are sure to return."

"Von Beust," she said, contemptuously, "has a mine that never fails; you can not exhaust it!"

"So much the better for us, your ladyship. As long as that mine is inexhaustible we shall flourish."

This conversation was carried on in German. Almost every one understood what was said. They gathered about the beautiful player, to hear her remarks, and to discuss what chances she had of retaining what she had won.

There were some twenty German barons and French counts there, all of whom had been playing. "I invite you all to supper to-night at twelve," said the Austrian; "a supper for kings. I

will tell von Beust to order it.—Here, Gratz," she said to the man who had been attending her, "follow me, and carry this trash to your master."

She went out to a wide porch overlooking the sea, and there she found a large, full-bearded man, with swollen limbs and red face, sitting at a small table on which were cigars and champagne.

She took the bale of notes from Gratz and flung it upon the table. "There's your god," she said; "prostrate yourself before it. It is your love, your life that I bring you. I return the small pittances you have doled out to me time after time. Keep it until I want it again. Your mine does not yield like that."

"Louise," said the other, reproachfully, "have I denied you anything since we have been together?"

"No," she answered, "but you have acted as if you would like to, when I have asked for a petty five hundred thousand francs."

"'Petty' do you call it?" he exclaimed. "Well, I was once years in making that much. You throw it away in a night."

"No more of reproaches; you promised me a carnival of pleasure and a feast of wealth. I'll have them both! You must order a supper for twenty—a supper for twenty noblemen—and don't come yourself. You would remind us of the skeleton the ancient Egyptians had at their feasts."

"Don't fear," he replied; "your friends are not to my taste. I never fancied the crowd of beggarly counts and barons you have about you."

"You reproach me," she said. "Be it so; but the poorest at my feast will not be so poor as you before I have done with you. We shall see if you've a mine that can never be exhausted. Order the supper—one fit for kings, as I told you. You once said you were my slave—prove it now."

She walked away, and was later seen at a table with four or five men, her cigarette in her mouth and her glass of Cognac at her side.

Baron von Beust, as he was called, rang a hand-bell. "Tell the master of the cuisine," said the baron to the waiter that answered the summons, "that I want to see him."

When the master of the restaurant came, von Beust counted out upon the table a pile of notes. "There," he said, "are thirty thousand francs. Let us have a supper fit for kings. Spend all this; if not enough, let me know. Have the supper in your handsomest saloon. See that there is plenty of light—six hundred

wax candles at least. Let there be twenty wines of different kinds ; eight brands of champagne, to suit every palate ; game worth its weight in gold ; fruit such as only princes can eat ; dishes—well, what you will. I leave that to you, but let the supper be such as Lucullus would not disdain to sit down to were he living.

“Now, the flowers—you have three hours in which to collect them. Let there be a feast of roses, even if every rosebud costs a ducat. Let this, in fact, be a feast worthy of the gods. Give us a full band of music, with the best selections ; let the music not offend the ear, but be so soft that it will not interrupt conversation ; and as the feast is ending let the music die out like the last rays of sunset or the whispering melody of the sea-shell as it dies away upon the ocean beach.

“Add what you please to gratify the palate or the senses, but, under pain of my displeasure, do not give the lady an occasion to find fault.”

“Yea, my lord baron,” said the master of the cuisine, “everything shall be beyond the lady’s expectations,” and he bowed himself out.

“Ah, *pestes* !” said the baron, “she will soon run the end of her rope, and I be free. But while she lives I’ll keep my promise to her. I take a pleasure now in watching her depravity, for the sooner shall I get rid of her. My day is done, I see full well ; no more hopes of love for me. The convent-doors have closed on all my hopes of happiness, and she who could alone, with her soft, sweet voice, have power to quiet my maddening pulse and soothe my aching heart with her sweet melodies and the touches of her velvet hand, has gone from me for ever. Her pure nature would not link itself with crime. What matters it all now ? I’ll nurse my grief alone, nor let the world see I have a care on earth. My battle with life will soon be ended, but while I live I’ll keep to my promise to this she counterpart of the devil. While I watch her sinking deeper and deeper into the cesspools of depravity I’ll ask the devil to take me off some marks for helping to send him such a vile wretch of Hades.

“And yet, O Heavens ! I once doted on this woman, and well remember I swore I would take her even were she blotched with sin. I find her worse than this ; the foulest leper that ever existed is clean to her. Her kisses are poison to the most cancerous lips ; the air she breathes is tainted with her vileness. When she dies, and is covered over with earth, the hungry worms will refuse to

feed upon her nauseous flesh, and flowers will die at once if planted on her grave. And yet this once dainty-looking thing, now daubed and stained with paint and dyes, with mind debased, and soul black with crimes, once held the largest corner of my heart! Bah! let me fill and drink until I forget the memory of my shame."

That night, at twelve o'clock, the guests assembled at the feast. *La belle Autrichienne*, as she was called, sat at the head of the table. Volorent, the manager and master of the cuisine, had outdone himself, and the counts and the barons filled the air with his praises. "Here," said the Austrian, flinging him a purse containing a thousand francs, "take this, and if you have a wife give it to her; it will keep her true to you, for woman's love can only be bought with gold." At which conceit all laughed.

At this frail woman's side sat an Italian count, with coal-black hair and mustache and dark, swarthy face. He looked as if he had Moorish blood in his veins, but, with one of those freaks of nature we often see, light-blue eyes softened his handsome face. His glittering teeth looked like a row of pearls, and his handsome figure made him resemble in outward form one of the gods of Olympus.

He whispered constantly into her willing ear, and she answered warmly to his tender words.

"And you would take a heart as stale as mine?" she murmured; "don't talk of love to me. I buried mine two years ago. You would not wish to drink of the same cup with me; you'd taste the leaves that give bitterness. Because it is brimming over and effervesces like sparkling champagne, you must not think there's life within its bubbles. Besides, do you know the danger of loving me? Do you know that my great dragon has tusks of steel? Don't you fear the gashes of these tusks? He is a lamb when undisturbed, but a lion in his fury."

"I would not deem the grapes worthy of pulling," her companion answered, "were it not that they are in the vicinity of a hornet's nest. But we know how to deal with dragons in Italy; there are no hides so tough but that our stilettoes can pierce them."

"Is that meant as a metaphor, or would you dare to do what you hint?" said the Austrian.

"I would dare anything for your smiles," was the reply.

"They have proved death to some," she said; "but, Count Conti, cease this talk, and tell me whether you have the horses that I wanted? I value my lovers as they serve me. Three days since

you promised me two pairs, that I could drive myself, worth twenty thousand francs ; I have not seen them yet."

"They are in Prince Como's stables," said the count, "and will come when you command. Shall I come with them, and watch the reins until you are sure you have command of the animals? They are beautiful bays, with white stars on their foreheads, and two white hind feet. They are beauties, I assure you ; there is nothing like them in all Italy. The price is rather high ; you might desire something more moderate."

"What do I care for price? Has not von Beust a mine that never fails? and did I not win last night five million francs?"

"I doubt that tale of von Beust's," said the count ; "I know, in fact, it is not true. I know every ducat that he owns. He has but little more besides what you won last night. When that is gone he'll have to sell his yacht for his board."

"But that which I won will last *me* all my life."

"The spendthrift thinks that way when he first comes into possession of his inheritance. You'll want to double that sum, as others have done before, and you'll lose as many millions as you have won. And when your money is gone, von Beust has no mine from which he can supply your wants."

"Can you prove this to me?" she asked, her face flushing with anger and her dark eyes taking on a cold, steely expression, that made her look dangerous.

"Attend! Count Conti," exclaimed Baron Dorf, a stout, red-faced German ; "what right have you to keep our beautiful hostess all to yourself?"

"Because," answered the handsome Austrian, "I choose him to monopolize me, and I am not fit for general conversation. I am going home. I am ill ; the excitement of the evening has been too much for me. I leave you all to spend the night as you like. Hang the plates on pegs, if it suits you, and macadamize the floor with the Sèvres china ; fill your finger-bowls with Château d'If, and use champagne to bathe your tired feet. Do as you please, and let me hear to-morrow that you've enjoyed yourselves to the top of your bent. Count Conti, take me home!"

She rose from her chair, and, with no more courtesy, left the room. As she went out, a small boy, not much bigger than a cat, slipped from under the table and followed close behind her, hearing all she said.

As soon as she had gone, Baron Dorf said to Baron Borgne,

"Excitement, faith! she could not stand excitement! It strikes me, Borgne, that Nero was such an one as she, and she would be just as cool as Nero if she could fire Rome to-morrow."

"Aye," said Borgne, "and if she were king of Dahomey she'd have a lake as large as Como daily filled with blood. Did any one ever see such a devilish eye? Something has angered her; she went away because she heard something from Conti that did not please her."

"And who is this Conti," asked Count Peste, "who comes and lords it over us and takes our hostess home just when it suits him? If any one will carry a note for me to-morrow, I'll demand satisfaction."

"Bravo!" said Baron Schlosser; "I am your man. It would give me pleasure to see this arrogant person dance with a bullet in his throat, or a sword-thrust between his ribs; but let me tell you, Peste, I saw him yesterday shoot twelve pigeons in succession on the wing with pistol at fifty paces; and at the gymnasium, when the fencing exercises were going on, I saw him take a foil from out a pupil's hand and, engaging the fencing-master, disarm him six times in as many minutes, sending his sword through the same hole in the window-pane every time."

"*Ma foi!*" exclaimed Peste, "what matters it to me whether he can fence or shoot, or if he is arrogant to you? He treats me with sufficient courtesy. Perhaps he knows no better. I should hate to mar the sport of such a man."

"I will tell you who he is," said Baron Brienne; "he is haberdasher to the Duke of Lorraine. He would not shoot so well if the pigeons had pistols in their claws, and would not hold a foil so firmly if his adversary's had the button off."

"May I tell him so?" inquired Baron Schlosser.

"Tell him the devil, if you liké," replied Baron Brienne. "Tell him not to fish in troubled waters. He could have his own lake to fish in for half the price. Tell him that von Beust will crush him like an egg-shell. Tell him that the crocodile will lead him to his death. Tell him we all were drunk to-night, and knew not what we said. Tell him Baron Brienne left Monaco this morning at six o'clock."

And so the supper wore on, the hostess being not spared amid the popping of the champagne-corks. Who would spare a beautiful woman that gave a supper costing thirty thousand francs, with permission to macadamize the floor with the costly Sèvres china?

They hung the plates, or tried to, on the wall-pegs ; they carried out her request in all respects, and, ere they left, the grand saloon looked like some pandemonium, where Satan's imps had racked their brains to see what mischief they could do.

Their excesses cost the beautiful Austrian twenty thousand francs more, which she paid without a murmur. "Von Beust," she said, "had mines to which there was no end."

While counts and barons were feasting at her expense, the *Autrichienne* sat with Count Conti. He wanted to take her hand, but she repulsed him. "No," she said, "I am not in the vein for that. Tell me what you know. You have raised a doubt in my heart ; but beware how you tell me that which is not true. If I have been deceived, I will make von Beust's life such a hell that he will drink of liquid fire to give him ease. He told me that he had a mine of wealth that could never end ; so far so good. He said he would place me on a pinnacle of happiness, where every wish of mine should be gratified, and men would fall and worship at my feet. He said that life to me should be one eternal joy. And I have enjoyed myself beyond my most sanguine wishes. I have robbed women of their husbands' love, and broken their hearts. What greater bliss can a woman have than this ? I have taken lovers from their sweethearts, and wrecked their happiness in an early grave. I have turned wise statesmen into blubbing fools ; a bishop's cap has not saved him from my fascinations. I have made usurious bankers pour out their wealth, and after a while have laughed them to scorn. Such love as men have offered can never last with women like me. Do you think that I have not loved with all this crime ? Yes, I loved one who so scorned my love that I sent him—loving him to madness—to an early grave, with ignominy resting on his name. And I love him dead better than the most brilliant man living.

"I came with von Beust because he promised me power to slake my thirst for vengeance on those who seek my love, who mock me with what Conrad could only give. While von Beust holds out, my power to kill the bodies and souls of men exists ; but if he proves recreant to his promise, I will lead him such a life that he will wish for peace sake that he were sunk to the hottest place in Satan's regions."

"You hate as you have loved," said the count ; "would that I could gain a tithe of that love ! If I show you that von Beust's mine is ended, and I can continue you in your power for life, what will be my reward ?"

"My love until I tire of you ; what would you more ?"

"Beggars must not be choosers. I will take the smiles I can get, and hope for more. If you will love me while *my* mines of wealth last, you will die at eighty, a female Croesus."

"But how shall I get rid of my lord and master, as he sometimes calls himself ? He would hunt you over the world, and crush the life out of you, if you took me away from him. Yet I think he hates me, and only lives in the hope of seeing me brought to justice for what he calls my sins. Can you love one so condemned as that ?"

"I will take care of him," said the count ; "dead men tell no tales. And now let us go in, for it is nearly morning. It will not do for us to be seen here."

"They strolled along the open road, where Ohic could not follow them, and the lady entered her château by a secret door where no one could see her. She found von Beust up and waiting for her, sitting by a table with champagne and cigars.

"What ! not gone to bed yet ?" she said.

"No, I never retire until you come home," he replied. "I stop to see you some night brought home dead."

"Not while your mine of wealth lasts, von Beust ; but when that is gone—well—" She took her light and went up-stairs, and as she closed the door she finished what she commenced saying below—"dead men tell no tales."

Next morning at eleven a handsome barouche drove up to Baron von Beust's front door. There were four beautiful bay horses harnessed to it. This was the team Count Conti had spoken of to the *belle Autrichienne*, and which she expected to purchase. It never struck her that the price was a high one ; all she cared for was that she should have the handsomest turnout in Monaco.

Count Conti was on the high box and held the reins, with the keeper of the horses at his side. It was a beautiful sight as the horses turned the circle and stopped at von Beust's front door. At a word spoken by the driver they stopped as still as if planted in the ground.

This team of horses was the most celebrated for miles around Monaco. They were broken to perfection to obey the driver's voice ; he would drive them without reins, merely by a peculiar intonation of the voice, although the reins were used for safety's sake.

The horses came out of their stable rather fresh, not having been driven for the last twenty-four hours. They were full of life,

and as Count Conti took the reins they found that though a master-hand was driving them, it was not the one to which they were accustomed. The driver remarked to Count Conti that he had better accompany the horses, as they were fresh and might give him trouble. This the count agreed to, providing only that he should hold the reins.

As these noble animals started from the stable-door their first impulse was to kick up their heels and run, but they found that a pair of strong arms held the reins, and one who knew how to manage them.

Count Conti was delighted with the team, and, as they sobered down to a ten-mile trot, he thought they were as near perfection as horse-flesh could be. But the horses knew as well as Conti did that their master was there. They could hear his voice as he entered into conversation with the count. They knew the sound, or even the scraping of his foot, as well as they knew their stable, and when he took the reins they seemed to have new life in them.

As they drove up to Baron von Beust's door the *belle Autrichienne* was looking out of one of the upper windows. She threw up the sash and called out, "Those are splendid; I like them; tell the man to name his price!" The Baron von Beust, who was sitting below in his library smoking his pipe, smiled and said to himself, "If she drives those horses often it will come sooner than I expected."

"Ah, madam!" said the count, "here are beauties for you, but the man has raised his price. It was twenty thousand francs this morning, it is thirty thousand now, it will be forty by to-morrow. Prince Deuceandorff has already offered twenty-five thousand francs, and will pay the thirty before he will lose them. You have the refusal. Cash is the rule."

"I will take them," she cried, excitedly. "Close the bargain at once. Von Beust," she said, rushing into his library, "I want thirty thousand francs. I have bought a team of horses; go out and pay for them. Only thirty thousand francs—such a bargain—as cheap as dirt!"

"Yes, all your bargains are cheap as dirt."

"Why, the supper last night cost more than that."

"I know," said the baron, "and the permit you gave them to follow their bent cost twenty thousand more."

"What could you expect? Life is short; let it be merry. But come, pay my bill. You grudge me everything I ask."

"I have never refused you anything," he answered, "and never will. My word is my bond. I promised you I'd be your slave; I'll keep my word until the mine runs out."

"The mine runs out!" she exclaimed, in disdain. "If you would have peace you had better not let that happen. You would doubly be my slave if that should come to pass. Will you never be a man? I wish I had one who would hector me. It would even be refreshing to be struck now and then. I hate tame lions and dancing elephants."

He smiled. "Here are thirty thousand francs; do with it as you please."

"Of course I will," she said; "it's mine."

"Yes, all I have is yours, except my heart. You forfeited the right to that long ago. But go, buy your team, and much good may it do you."

"Forfeit the right to your heart!" she exclaimed, indignantly; "don't despise me, or I might fall in love with you, you barrel of beer!" And she went off, laughing loudly.

In ten minutes the horses were here. She got up at once on the seat and took the reins, with Count Conti at her side, and the driver inside the barouche. She intended to try the animals on the country turnpike—a hard, smooth road, where they could show their speed.

The horses had been driven just enough to raise their spirits; but, at a word from their owner, they settled down to a fast trot, and were as obedient as could be desired. They seemed to know that strange hands held the reins, and now and then would take the bits in their mouths and almost pull the Austrian's arms out of their sockets; but a peculiar whistle from the owner would bring them to a steady trot. In this manner she drove for two hours, until she was satisfied with her bargain. Then she drove to von Beust's château.

The horses were reeking with perspiration, and heavy flakes of foam stood on their flanks and covered their mouths, which were bleeding from the effect of the heavy bits.

"Now," she said, "I want the horses here at four o'clock. I will drive myself, with Count Conti, and make the people on the streets of Monaco look at me with envy."

As von Beust sat in his library, listening to these words, a smile of grim satisfaction lighted up his face. "The end is not far off," he said to himself.

At four o'clock the barouche was driven to the door. The horses had been cleaned, and their glossy skins shone like amber in the sun. A beautiful set of harness had been put on the animals, which made them look still more beautiful.

La belle Autrichienne was standing at the door, habited in a beautiful driving-costume, with long gauntlets reaching to the elbow, and a small white morocco bag slung to her side, hanging from straps across her shoulder. She wore a beautifully fitting bell-crowned hat—as was then the fashion—and, as she mounted the seat and took the reins from the driver's hands, she looked the perfection of a Diana. She had never looked so beautiful as then.

"Had I not better go with you?" said the driver; "the horses are rather mettlesome to-day, notwithstanding the brisk trot you gave them this morning."

"No!" she answered; "what glory would there be in that? The people of Monaco would laugh at me, and say that I was under tutelage. No, Count Conti will sit beside me, and if I should want assistance he will give it."

She cracked the whip, and the horses started off with their heads in the air, but at the tightening of the reins settled down to a steady trot. They went steadily until they had reached the end of the Strado, and *la belle Autrichienne* hauled them up to turn them.

All the world was out that afternoon, and splendid equipages lined the drive. Every one was struck with the beauty of the woman, and admired her daring, and the manner in which she managed her team. "Ah! *la belle Autrichienne!*" said the men, who had often partaken of her princely suppers; "*mon Dieu*, how well she drives! Lucky dog, that Conti, who holds her in his hand!"

"Don't look at her," cried the disgusted wives; "I would not have you notice her for the world."

"Ah!" replied the husbands, "she is as respectable as Conti, and he has the *entrée* of the best circles; the women are all pulling caps for him."

"Yes, *c'est une autre chose*," said the austere wives; "who cares what men do? She is an Amazon, and not a respectable one."

"But the most beautiful one in the world," was the answer.

"Don't look at her, nevertheless," said the wives, although they and the daughters would look at her out of the corners of their eyes.

But the Austrian heeded them not as she passed, bending gracefully forward and driving as if she had done nothing else all her days. She drove past them as if they were dust under her feet. She knew that no one in Monaco could vie with her in wealth, and she took the initiative and coolly out all the virtuous women in the town. Some few choice spirits of her own set were admitted to her confidence, but only a few. She despised all the rest, knowing she could buy their acquaintance at any time. There were not a dozen women in the place who would not have gone to a grand ball at von Beust's château if they had been asked.

"How can she help being beautiful?" inquired the men; "and how can princes, lords, bishops, and bankers help falling at her feet when she chooses to make them do so? She is Venus in disguise, sent on earth to charm men to their ruin, while her husband sits at home, indifferent to her, and fills himself with champagne."

"Never marry a beautiful woman," said one; "you pay her bills; her kisses are for other men, and your house is full of lovers."

"What is the use of a woman being beautiful if she can not have her swing?" queried another. "Who wants to be looking at pictures of arid deserts all the time, when one can look on scenes of beauty, such as lovely mountains, with cascades pouring over their sides and escaping through the rocks into the sea? I would give a thousand *pesos* for a picture of *la belle Autrichienne* driving those horses."

La belle Autrichienne had passed over the drive three or four times, and each time she had increased the speed of her horses more and more. By this time all the virtuous old women were very angry with their husbands for the sentiments they had expressed. "That woman," said one, "is driving against the rules, and if our husbands had any respect for us they would call the police and have her arrested."

"*Ah, mon Dieu!*" exclaimed a husband, "the police worship her. She threw an entire supper-set out of the window the other night and cut a man's head open. When the police came up to see who was the culprit, she threw a heavy purse to them. 'Ah, it is madame,' they said, and quietly moved away. She made von Beust almost shake the life out of a Russian prince for saying she was a painted devil. Von Beust met the Russian—a powerful man—on the sidewalk, took him by the collar, and flung him up into the crotch of a large tree. He challenged von Beust; the latter

knocked the sword out of his hand, and then thrashed him with his own blade until he cried for mercy. His wife sat in her carriage clapping her hands and throwing gold pieces to the police, who were so engaged in picking them up that they saw nothing of what was going on. Ah! the police adore her, and no husband would dare interfere with her sport."

By this time *la belle Autrichienne* had become excited with her drive, although her arms were getting weary with holding the reins. Her cheeks were brilliant with color, and her eyes flashed like diamonds. She grew more and more audacious, and at length began to bow and smile at the husbands whom she knew, and who had taken supper with her on several occasions.

"Drive home!" said the indignant wives; "we will not submit to this insolence," and many of them drove away from the Strado.

They went in good time. The handsome horses were getting excited, and Count Conti remonstrated with the fair driver on her mad career. "Give me the reins," he said; "let me stop the horses if I can."

"No," she replied, "it is heaven! See, I am sending the wives home with their husbands. We will soon clear the street." This shortly came to pass. She made the turn again, for the fifth time, and did it handsomely; but then the horses took the bits between their teeth, and, kicking up their heels, away they flew. They no longer felt any strength bearing on the reins—her arms were benumbed.

"Give me the reins," said Conti again. "Let me stop them while there is time!"

"Never before these people," she replied. "They would chuckle over it." On the horses ran, the barouche swinging from side to side. It was a heavy and strongly built vehicle, and to avoid it all the carriages drew to one side to let it pass. One carriage, occupied by two elderly ladies, was not in time. The left wheels of the barouche caught its right wheels, taking them off and landing the occupants and two coachmen in the street.

Every one began to alight from the carriages, which drove even on to the sidewalks, for fear *la belle Autrichienne* would return.

"*Ah, ciel!*" exclaimed an old French count, "she drives like a beautiful devil, as if she were sent on a mission of vengeance."

Just at that instant a large hay-cart, well loaded, came out of a cross street. It was drawn by a pair of oxen, and the horses struck it, going with all their speed. In a moment they were doubled into

a mass, one on top of the other, and the barouche on top of all, with the pole broken short off. Fortunately, the carriage did not upset. The crowd immediately rushed forward, and, with the help of the police, secured the horses, which were kicking and floundering about at the risk of breaking their limbs. The carriage was hauled back, and the horses put upon their feet, subdued, very much cut, and trembling all over.

In the mean time *la belle Autrichienne* and Count Conti had kept their seats, and, when the carriage was hauled from off the horses, the count quietly got down, and, giving his companion his hand, helped her to alight, who taking his arm, they coolly walked off together, as if nothing had happened. She stopped for a moment, and, taking out of her pocket a heavy purse of gold, scattered it among the crowd.

Shouts rent the air of "*Vive la belle Autrichienne*" until they turned the corner and were out of sight. Count Conti then called a carriage, and told the driver to take the lady to the château of the Baron von Beust, and went himself to look after the horses.

When *la belle Autrichienne* arrived at von Beust's door he was sitting in his library drinking champagne, as usual. "Well," he said, "I went out to look at you drive on the Strado. I saw you make your fourth turn, and said to myself, 'The fifth turn will settle her.' You upset, of course?"

She looked at him scornfully. "Upset! no! A stupid hay-cart got in my way. *Bien—voilà tout*. We telescoped, and I walked off."

"And the horses?"

"I expect you will have to pay for another team to-morrow. It isn't comfortable owning horses that run away. *Attend!*" she said, "I want funds to-night; I go to the Casino, and shall likely play heavily. Give me six hundred thousand francs."

"Certainly," replied von Beust, "but I thought you had given up play. You make a mistake by commencing again."

"So I said to you about your pipes and champagne."

"Yes, but wine only gives gout and dyspepsia; play brings poverty, and sometimes beggary."

"Not while the mine lasts," she said, regarding him earnestly.

"That is true, but mines do run out, and you draw heavily on mine. But you shall have the last cent." He rose and went back to his desk, and gave her the six hundred thousand francs.

That night there was a large crowd at Monte Carlo. It was

rumored about that *la belle Autrichienne* would play at *rouge-et-noir*. Her performance of the afternoon had created a great *furor* to see her. She was well known in Monaco. Thousands had recognized her in the streets, and had been struck with her wonderful beauty. Many had witnessed her eccentricities in throwing away her gold, which was not from liberality, but the love of notoriety. Although cases of great poverty were often brought to her attention, she never did anything to help the afflicted. Her gold was only thrown to the crowd, which circulated extravagant reports of her gifts.

These eccentricities gave her the credit of possessing great wealth, and while the higher orders criticised and maligned her, the crowd fairly adored her. She could not appear in public without being met with *vivas* all along the street. The shouts of the crowd were as the breath of her nostrils to her. It was the sweetest incense that could be offered her, while at the same time she despised her adorers, and would have taken pleasure in trampling them under her feet.

"What a shame to speak ill of the sweet creature!" said an old woman in the crowd who had picked up a gold piece, which she only secured after the best part of her dress had been torn off her. "What a shame it is in these old cats, who never give one a *maravedi*, to sit down and pull her to pieces, and she all the time showering her money among the poor! God's blessings be upon her!" It never struck the old woman that if the lady wanted to be charitable she might have selected from the crowd those who stood most in need of assistance. But she followed the practice of princes, who throw their largesses to the crowd and do not bother themselves about individual cases.

"And then to say that she gambles and throws her money away on *rouge-et-noir*!" said another. "The people don't believe a word of it. If she gambled she would have no money left to give to the poor, for it is well known that those hawks pluck all the chickens clean that go to their crib."

"And what if she does spend millions on her dresses!" said another; "doesn't it all go to the poor? while those old cats that abuse her have a mantua-maker in their houses for a mere pittance to make all the ill-fitting clothes in the family, and then call them Parisian dresses."

"And there's her husband, Baron von Beust," said another. "I wonder if he doesn't know whether she is good or not, when he

gives her all she asks for, and has a schooner anchored out there full of gold, which he keeps just for the use and amusement of this sweet creature. And they say he loves her as the apple of his eye, and laughs at everything she does."

Many were the remarks made about *la belle Autrichienne* that evening over the dinner-tables among the *haut ton* at her extravagant sayings and her cruel conduct in riding over people in the street. The old Countess Bornleff and her companion, who took care of her lap-dog, who were dumped into the street, were severe in their denunciations of the Austrian adventuress. "She drive!" exclaimed the countess; "you might as well take a woman out of the insane asylum and put her on a carriage-box to drive mad horses. She ought to be put in the calaboose for a week for not knowing the respect due the nobility. The Austrian women always were half savages, and this one is a she devil. Only to think of her laming my little Skye! She drive, indeed! I wish I could get hold of her."

"What would you do with her, madam?" asked the Count Bornleff, who it was well known did not marry his wife for love. "You talk of her driving; why, there's no one in this town except their owner who could drive those horses five times up and down the Strado without running over a dozen carriages, and she only grazed one."

"Do you call it only grazing to take one's wheels off? You men always side with that kind of people, instead of setting a better example to your children and to society."

"Well, madam," replied the count, emptying his champagne-glass, "considering that you have never honored me by presenting me with anything better than that Skye terrier, your remark doesn't apply to me; and as to society, it is able to take care of itself. It is made up of so many ugly old women that a beauty would not have any chance among them. *La belle Autrichienne* is like a bird of paradise among so many jackdaws."

There were innumerable quarrels between husbands and wives about *la belle Autrichienne*. The latter actually hated her, while the husbands, even those who did not know her, adored her in secret. As to the young ladies of the *haut ton*, they were becoming more demoralized every day. They could not be induced to keep their eyes off *la belle Autrichienne*; watched what she wore from day to day, and copied it as near as they could. Everything, in fact, they wore was *à l'Autrichienne*; and she was getting so many

dresses from Paris all the time that it cost the *haut ton* a great deal of money to keep up with the fashion. No mother was willing to allow her daughters to remain out of fashion because *la belle Autrichienne* set the style. There were too many there trying to make a *bon parti* to wish to subject their daughters to criticism.

The daughters said, "We are willing to go away from here, or to close our doors against every one, but while we are in society we must wear the latest Paris fashions."

Then the mothers began to agree among themselves that *la belle Autrichienne* was at least an amusement, and if she went from Monaco there would be nothing for society to gossip about.

People went night after night to Monte Carlo to see the Austrian play *rouge-et-noir*. It was better than going to the opera at Monaco, which latter was generally very proper and very stupid, where one opera was sung forty nights in succession, and the singers went to sleep over the music.

When it would be whispered about that *la belle Autrichienne* was going to play *rouge-et-noir*—and it would always leak out, since she had certain ways of letting it be known—all the wives and their daughters would express a great desire that *paterfamilias* would take them to Monte Carlo to hear the great band, and *paterfamilias* was always willing to go.

This night grand preparations were being made to receive a large number of guests. A night à *l'Autrichienne*, as it was called, brought great profits to Monte Carlo, and on this occasion a rush was expected. The price of chairs was doubled, and the restaurant was supplied with an extra quantity of viands. At ten o'clock the place was crowded.

Among the visitors that night were the Rev. Mr. Raymond and a young and beautiful girl reputed to be his daughter. We have all met them before, but have not seen the sweet brunette Mary metamorphosed into a blonde.

She was called *la belle Américaine*. Her once fair complexion was now a light olive, with a rich coloring, and her beautiful tresses were transformed into lovely golden-chestnut curls, while her eyebrows were a darker shade of chestnut. Metamorphose Mary as you would, she could not be otherwise than beautiful. While *la belle Autrichienne* had been changed for the worse by the paint and dyes she made use of, Mary had, if possible, been improved, and the extra inch of heel she had added to her shoes made her figure more symmetrical than ever. Her eyes were brightened by her

change of complexion. She looked more like a beautiful French girl than an American.

The Rev. Mr. Raymond, hearing that *la belle Autrichienne* was to play that night, had offered one of the proprietors a considerable sum if he would secure him two chairs where he could be in front as she was playing. These being secured, he went early and took his places.

The crowd also came early, that they might secure good seats, and the proprietors, to increase their gains, had placed rows of benches, rising one above the other, all around the room, and charged ten francs a seat. Only those who were going to play were allowed to sit next the table, and each place was numbered, so that there should be no confusion, although the arrangements were perfect.

Many persons wondered why it was that so old and reverend a gentleman as Mr. Raymond should take so conspicuous a place, and subject his beautiful daughter to so many temptations.

"What a country!" remarked old Count Pensé, "where an old fellow like that can bring out such a beautiful young daughter, and she no doubt rolling in wealth."

"*Ma foi!*" exclaimed Prince Gourmand; "but look at the man; he is an Apollo, and more remarkable than his daughter. He would make his fortune in Italy sitting as a model."

"*Vraiment!*" said Count Pensé, "and his daughter *aussi*."

At ten o'clock precisely the bank opened, and the players at the table, at the word "*Attend!*" piled up their gold and began to play for small amounts. There was little attention paid to the betting, every one watching the door to see *la belle Autrichienne* enter. As the minutes passed, expectation became very great.

"What if she should disappoint us?" said Count Pensé. "She is so capricious, and if she thought it would annoy the *haut ton* she would not come. She hates the aristocracy, and never misses an opportunity to show it."

"No," said Prince Gourmand, "she is too fond of displaying herself and showing how she can throw away her hundred thousand francs at a bet; but she had better look out for herself. Dubois is at the wheel to-night, and he can turn the ball into any color or number he pleases. Hist! here she comes, and Count Conti—her *fidus Achates*—with her."

Sure enough, *la belle Autrichienne* was entering the gambling-hall, preceded by Count Conti, who elbowed his way, with his mus-

cular arms, toward the place opposite the banker, while a man followed behind her with his arms full of packages of notes and a bag of gold.

The banker, marker, and croupier sat calm and immovable at the sight of this beautiful woman, who had given them so much trouble and had broken their bank four times. They knew human nature, however, too well not to be sure that she would return to play, and would end at last by losing every cent she owned.

La belle Autrichienne was arrayed that night in all her splendor. She wore a rich watered, pearl-colored silk, trimmed with costly lace, with a small black velvet hat to match. Two beautiful *solitaire* diamonds glittered in her ears, each worth fifty thousand francs; in her bosom was another diamond worth a hundred thousand francs more, and a single stone in her hat worth twice as much as the others together. Her costume was complete in all its parts, and every one in that throng pronounced her the most gorgeous creature they had ever seen. She calmly took her seat, without deigning to cast a look upon the crowd. She arranged her money in the order she intended to bet, and, when the banker cried "*Attend!*" commenced playing small amounts like the other players, who were merely betting *pour amuser*. They knew how impossible it would be for them to fix their attention on the game when *la belle Autrichienne* began to play in earnest. The latter confined herself to the two colors red and black, and never bet upon numbers. After betting for some fifteen minutes, she seemed to strike her luck.

Every time the wheel stopped she won large amounts. Then she began to play with a *furor* that delighted the lookers-on and made them hold their breath.

Talk of the excitement over a horse-race or a closely contested game of billiards, a dog-fight or a bull-bait! Not one of them will compare with the excitement over a gambling-table where an exceptionally pretty woman is betting her thousands as coolly as if she were throwing away so many sous.

La belle Autrichienne sat unmoved, and received her winnings as they were paid by the banker. Sometimes she let her money remain three or four times in succession on one color, an unwise way to gamble, as the table is given opportunity to arrange their methods, if they have any, to suit the bank, rather than the players. She had won over six hundred thousand francs. When she had got well under way, she had never bet less than fifty thousand francs at a time, which soon runs up at *rouge-et-noir*.

She had won five times on the *rouge*, and still let her increased bet remain on that color, so that there were six hundred thousand francs upon the table of her bet alone.

"I think, madam," said the banker, smiling, "that this is a case of your breaking the bank again. Your luck is wonderful! I have never seen anything like it before."

Then the wheel was turned, while every one held his breath. You could have heard a pin drop, but *la belle Autrichienne* sat unmoved, calm as a summer's lake, only her coal-black eyes looked intently on her pile.

It seemed to the crowd that the motion of the wheel would never cease and let the result be known. At last it was announced that *rouge* had won again, and shouts shook the room so that the vibrations of the air almost extinguished the wax candles.

"Pshaw!" said the Austrian, for the first time opening her mouth; "there's no excitement here. It is going to be a walk-over!"

"Shall it stay there?" inquired the croupier.

"No, change it to *noir*!" she replied; "*rouge* has had its day." Twelve hundred thousand francs were now upon the table, and the excitement was at fever heat.

As the word *Attend* was uttered, and the wheel turned, the crowd craned their necks as if they could not already see well enough. "*Noir*!" said the marker, without changing a muscle of his face.

"*La madame gagne toujours*," said the banker, calmly.

"*Madame perd jamais*," said the croupier, sweetly, and all in tones of sympathy, as if they were really pleased.

Mary had moved her chair close to her brother's, and had placed her hand on his. She trembled all over, and her eyes were staring at the beautiful Austrian as if in horror.

Charles looked at her as he felt her hand seek his, and noticed that she was trembling violently. He saw her look of horror, and surmised at once the cause.

"What is it, Mary?" he asked, in a whisper.

She was gasping as if she wanted air, and her eyes were fixed intently on *la belle Autrichienne*. "Who is that, Charles—that woman playing like a gambler?"

"Don't you know her?" asked Charles.

"I should say," replied Mary, in a whisper, "that it was Louise Morton but for her hair and paint. Can it be? Her hair was raven black."

"What was yours, Mary, before you left Paris?" he inquired.

"I see," said Mary. "Good heavens, what a change! Who would have thought she could ever come to this? Let us go from here; the sight of her so debased makes me feel like fainting."

"Wait," said Charles, "and see the depth of degradation to which a woman can be brought. It will dim her glory in your eyes if ever she possessed your respect. I brought you here to show her to you in all her infamy. Her race will soon be run."

"Let the bet stay upon *noir*," said *la belle Autrichienne* as for the first time, with a look of triumph, she raised her eyes to the crowd, as much as to say, "You will see what *la belle Autrichienne* can do."

She suddenly fixed her gaze on the Rev. Mr. Raymond and his daughter, and, forgetting the crowd and the triumph she hoped to achieve, she looked confused, and whispered to Count Conti, "The hawk is hovering in the air; the partridge is trembling in the heather. Can no one rid me of that man?" At that instant the marker announced, "The game will begin."

La belle Autrichienne looked dazed for some cause or other; she had lost her head. "Stop," she said, "I will change my bet to *rouge*."

"*Attend!*" cried the marker, and the wheel went round.

"*Le noir* wins!" said the marker, and the croupier smilingly hauled in twelve hundred thousand francs as the banker remarked, "Madam is kind to let us breathe."

La belle Autrichienne wrote a few words on a card, and said to Count Conti, "Take this to von Beust; tell him to give you all that I won before."

As Count Conti passed out, Chic followed at a respectful distance; and when Conti got into a carriage, Chic jumped up behind. "Drive like the wind," said Conti; "double fare for speed!"

Von Beust was in his library with his champagne and cigars when the count arrived. Conti placed the card in his hand.

"So soon?" he exclaimed, laughing good-naturedly; "well, she shall have her way. I told her she always should, and I never break my word." He arose, and taking from an iron chest twenty packages of notes, he placed them in Conti's hands. "There, tell her that ends the mine; there is no more. To-morrow I will sell the schooner to pay our debts, and will find a shelter elsewhere."

The count hastily departed, and soon was at the side of *la belle Autrichienne*.

As he left, von Beust took from the table a note directed to himself. "What is this?" he muttered; "it must have been left here while I was asleep."

The note read :

"Take care. Your life is threatened ; be watchful to-night.

"VERE SAYE."

"Ah ! my quondam friend," said von Beust, "whom I loved as a brother, so much alike were we. I will take your advice, which is well meant. Vere Saye knows something, but what does he here?" and von Beust went up-stairs, remained some twenty minutes, and then came down again and resumed his cigar.

In the mean while the game at Monte Carlo went on. *La belle Autrichienne*, in the absence of Conti, had made her bag of gold last until his return. Then she commenced again to bet heavily, but she had become confused. The eyes of the Rev. Mr. Raymond were upon her, and he never for a moment removed his gaze. She felt as if the eyes of a basilisk were fixed upon her. She won no more ; pile after pile was swept away, until every franc she owned was safe in the bank.

"I fear madam bet rashly the last time," said the banker, with a smile. "I would have advised her to bet upon the *rouge*, but feared she would think my advice uncalled for. Can we do aught to help madam continue the game? Her note is perfectly good."

"No," she said, coolly, taking a *solitaire* from one of her beautiful ears. "That cost fifty thousand francs ; give me forty-five thousand for it. I will redeem it, for my luck is sure to turn."

The banker took the *solitaire*, and his hawk's eye at once detected the value of the gem. He was always prepared for such transactions, and if a human soul had been offered in pawn he would have known the price to fix on it. He placed the money in her hands, and she put down twenty thousand francs, her cheeks glowing as she did so.

The crowd saw her mortification. The *haut ton* nudged each other. "She'll come to grief soon," they said. But once more luck followed her, and the banker smiled again upon her.

Thousands of francs now lay piled up at her side. She took a number of notes to place them upon the *rouge*, when her eye caught those of her known enemy fixed upon her. She became unnerved,

and placed the money on the *noir* as the wheel was turning ; it was too late to change the bet. *Rouge* won, and so luck changed until she was again bankrupt.

Then the other solitaire ear-ring was handed to the banker, and forty-five thousand francs given her in return. She placed them on the *rouge*, but *noir* won.

Then she took the beautiful solitaire from off her breast, saying, "That cost a hundred thousand francs."

The banker handed her the money, saying, "We would as lief have your note."

"No," she answered, "I will soon redeem it ; my luck is sure to change."

"*Attend*," said the marker, and in a moment all her money was swept away.

She looked at her enemy and saw his gaze still fixed steadily upon her, while the woman at his side regarded her with horror. For the first time she recognized Mary through all her disguise, and whispered to Conti, "I can not win while that man, my mortal enemy, remains here. Will not some one free me from my enemy ?"

Then she raised her beautiful arm, bare to the elbow, and plucked from her hat the magnificent diamond there, which had no equal in all Monaco.

"No queen in Europe has so fine a jewel in her crown as this," she said. "Give me five hundred thousand francs for it ; I will redeem it soon. It would kill von Beust to lose it. Luck will now change ; I am sure of it."

The banker laid down the money at her side. She divided it into two parts, and then glanced at her enemy, whose gaze was still fixed upon her, while a scornful smile curled his lip.

The pretty girl at his side sat with her hands over her eyes as if to shut out the horrid scene, while tears rolled down her cheeks.

La belle Autrichienne trembled visibly before them ; she felt their hour of triumph had come. She placed her bet upon the *rouge*.

"*Le rouge perd !*"

There was a hum of voices in the room, while smiles of triumph lighted up the faces of the old women, but men sympathized with this queen of gamblers. "What a grand woman !" they said. "See, she is game to the last."

Then she placed her last bet on the *noir*. The wheel turned.

"Noir perd !"

She rose from her chair. "No supper to-night, friends," she said to those who were at the table. "Banker, I thank you for your courtesy.—Enough for to-night ; I will redeem my jewels to-morrow, and try you again."

She looked at her enemy ; he stood there, and his eyes showed so much scorn for her that for once she quailed. She whispered, "Conti, remove my enemy from my path. I will give you my love in return." Then, taking the count's arm, she calmly walked away.

One burst of enthusiastic cheering broke from the crowd, who admired the pluck of this enchantress, while the banker cried out, "The bank is closed for to-night."

Conti and *la belle Autrichienne* disappeared by a side door, and were lost to sight except to that of Chic, who followed close behind.

"Come to the schooner," said she. "What is left of the mine is there. Let us leave von Beust to pay the bills to-morrow ; he would sell the schooner for what she will bring. But before we go, remove my enemy."

They walked swiftly away to the quay, where a four-oared boat from the schooner was lying. She jumped in. "Go," she said, "and do my bidding, Count. I can have no peace while that man lives !"

Count Conti left her abruptly and followed the crowd, jostling them as he rapidly passed.

At last he saw his game ahead—a tall, stout man with the muscles of a Hercules, and with a young woman at his side.

They were in a retired and obscure spot, when suddenly the Rev. Mr. Raymond received a violent dagger-thrust in his side.

The person who struck the blow recoiled in astonishment and ran away, for the handle of the dagger remained in his hand, while the blade fell on the stone pavement. The reverend gentleman stooped and picked up the blade, saying, "I will keep this as a memento of to-night."

The would-be assassin ran until quite out of breath. "I have another dagger," he muttered, "but it would be useless against such a coat of mail ; and, besides, he will be on his guard, and would soon make mince-meat of me. But I must leave no enemy in my rear. I will not do things by halves ; the schooner must all be mine." Then he turned toward the château.

At that moment Chic approached his master. "I saw them go down toward the quay," he said, "and followed them. I heard them talk of assassinating some enemy, who might be you, I thought. Then he put her in the boat. 'Haste!' she said, 'we must sail at once.' I followed him closely, and saw him strike you, but I knew he had not hurt you, and I followed him again as he ran. He stopped a moment as if to consider, and then turned on his tracks and went toward the château. He means mischief *there*, for those two are escaping from Baron von Beust."

"Chic," said the reverend, "see Miss Mary home; go with him, Mary, for life and death hang on my swiftness." Mary complied, not knowing what all this mystery meant, and the Rev. Mr. Raymond rushed off with remarkable speed for a man apparently so old.

When within one hundred yards of the château of von Beust he saw the dim outline of a figure passing rapidly around the corner of the house. He sprang forward with the swiftness of a deer, but no one could be seen. The man, whoever he was, had disappeared.

"Just in time!" he said to himself. "He was looking for an entrance, and would soon have found the way to von Beust's." The reverend saw a light on the lower floor. It was in the library, where von Beust always sat with his pipes and wine until his wife came home, no matter how late it was. Then he would take his candle and retire, asking no questions as to whither she had been or what she had been doing.

There were blinds to the lower windows. One of these was partly open, and the reverend looked in. Von Beust was sitting in his arm-chair throwing his arms wildly about, trying to get at a dagger, the handle of which could be seen sticking out of his shoulder.

The champagne-bottle had been knocked over, and there was a smell of smoke within the room. A small flame was issuing from a mahogany book-case in a corner of the library.

It did not take the reverend a moment to fling the window open, smash in the book-case, and extinguish the flames. Then he went to the assistance of von Beust, from whose shoulder the blood was spirting.

"Are you much hurt?" he asked, kindly.

"Yes, I am hurt to death," replied von Beust, in a faint voice. "My life is ebbing away. It was that cowardly Count Conti that struck the blow."

"Be quiet," said the reverend ; "let me relieve you first ; you can tell me afterward. I go prepared for emergencies of this kind ; my business often requires it, and it is also my pleasure to relieve those in distress." He took from his coat-pocket a box containing scissors, probes, and needles for sewing up wounds, together with various kinds of plasters. He then proceeded to cut off von Beust's clothing until he reached the coat of mail, which the latter had put on when he received the note signed Vere Saye.

"I was asleep in my chair," said von Beust, "when the villain got in. He struck me first directly over the heart ; this chain-armor saved me ; the second stroke was downward."

"Then you got my note in time ?" said the other.

"Ah, Vere Saye !" exclaimed von Beust, "I thought I knew your voice ; glad to meet you again, although you did serve me such a shabby trick. Your duty, however, I suppose. I wish you had done it before the marriage, for since then my life has been a hell."

"Be quiet now ; I will explain all that another time. Have you a man in the house ?"

"Yes," replied von Beust, "an Italian boy ; the rest go home at eleven at night. Ring that bell."

The reverend first wrote a note to the commissary of police, telling him to arrest all on board the schooner, adding, "They sail in half an hour."

He then rang the bell, and the sleepy boy came stumbling up the stairs and was met by the reverend outside his master's door.

"Run," said he, "all the way to the commissary of police with this note, and when you return, bring an apothecary with you ; your master is ill."

He then fastened all the library-blinds and locked the library-door. Next he applied himself to the task of getting off von Beust's shirt of mail. It laced down the front and was easily disposed of. Then he went to work *secundum artem*, and, having all his instruments and styptics ready, prepared to withdraw the knife, an operation that caused the patient great pain. Then he brought the edges of the wound together with sticking-plaster, and sewed it up.

"Now," he said, "where is your brandy ?"

"In that case," replied von Beust. The reverend gave him half a tumbler of the raw spirit.

"There !" he exclaimed, "you are worth a dozen dead men ;

now lean on me, and let me get you to your bed. You have had a narrow escape ; had the knife gone forward instead of backward, it would have penetrated your lungs."

"I never go to bed," said von Beust, "until my wife is in."

"She will not be home to-night," said the other, "if she ever returns. She has eloped with Count Conti in the schooner."

Von Beust expressed no surprise at this intelligence. "It's an ill wind," he said, "that blows nobody good. Thank God she is gone ! I will lean on you, and get up-stairs if I can."

The reverend picked von Beust up in his arms and carried him to his sleeping-room as if he had been a child, undressed him, and put him to bed.

"There are not many men who could carry me up-stairs like that," said von Beust. "You are stronger than I am ; the tournament at Hawks' Roost satisfied me of that."

"I did not show my real strength there," said the other ; "but try and go to sleep. I will take charge of the rest, and you must make no objections to anything I do. This is the turning point in your life, which will lead you to happiness. That wound will prove a Godsend to you, and you should thank Providence for it."

"I will thank Providence for anything, now that my wife is gone," replied von Beust.

Half an hour afterward there came a knock at the street-door, and, on opening it, a gentlemanly young man presented himself to the reverend. "I am a physician," he said, "and was told that I am wanted here." The young man's clothes betokened poverty, and his hat was minus a nap.

"Have you much practice ?" inquired the reverend.

"Very little, sir," was the reply. "No man can get practice in Monaco unless he is able to drive a handsome doctor's cart, with a tiger in livery, and wear good clothes. If I had all that I should get practice fast enough ; but why ask me to expose my poverty ?"

"Have you sufficient confidence in yourself to perform a difficult operation ?"

"I have been in the best hospitals in Paris, and my certificates will speak for me."

"How much will it require to obtain the cart, the tiger, good clothes, and the other professional necessities ?"

The doctor laughed. "Well, really, sir, you take an unaccountable interest in my affairs ; but if I am merely roused up at this hour for your amusement, I must bid you good-night."

"Keep cool," was the reply. "I will help you if you will help me ; answer my question."

"Well," said the doctor, "the horse and cart would cost three thousand francs, livery three hundred, harness three hundred, one month's pay for tiger seventy-five, complete outfit in clothes fifteen hundred—in all, say five thousand one hundred and seventy-five francs. Can you tell me the way, sir, to get it honestly?"

"I will give you twice that amount if you will practice an honorable deceit for me."

"You seem to be an honorable man," replied the doctor, "and I think I can promise to do what you require."

"I simply want you to attend a wounded man. An attempt has been made to assassinate him, and I want the assassins to think they have killed him, so that they will be off their guard, and I can secure them more easily. What I require is a doctor's certificate of death. We will have a funeral, and the coffin, filled with sand, will be duly buried, after which we can go away at our leisure."

"I see no great objections to your proposal," said the doctor ; "you are too respectable a looking person to deceive me."

"I will show you your patient," said the reverend, "and you can make up your mind what to do. But first come into the library, and I will show you what occurred there." He unlocked the library-door and they went in.

"Look at these bloody clothes," said the reverend. "In that bloody chair my friend was sitting only an hour since in all his strength and vigor. The assassin, who is known, crept in, and struck him over the heart with a dagger; but my friend wore chain-armor, and that saved his life. Then the murderer, knowing the shoulder was unprotected, struck downward, the knife glanced backward instead of going straight, and the assassin, supposing he had killed his victim, fled. I stripped my friend, pulled out the knife, stopped the bleeding, brought the wound together and sewed it up. You must do the rest. Now come and look at the wounded man."

When they went up-stairs they found von Beust sleeping, and it was not thought proper to disturb him.

"There is not much to be done," said the doctor ; "the wound will suppurate, and it must be kept clean until it heals. The system must be maintained in a proper condition, and the patient be fed on a pure and nourishing diet. In two weeks I think he will be able to travel a short distance."

"Then," said the reverend, "give me your word of honor not to divulge the secret. Merely report that Baron von Beust died of apoplexy, which people will readily believe. Give me a certificate of death, and we will have a modest funeral. Now, come help me burn those bloody clothes, and remove all evidence of the gentleman's being wounded."

A fire was kindled in the library, and the clothing and chair consumed. Then with soap and a scrubbing-brush the blood-stains were removed from the carpet.

"I must ask you to wait here," said the reverend, "until I return from the hotel with my daughter; then you can go home until seven o'clock in the morning."

The Italian boy had long since retired to bed, and knew nothing of what was going on. *La belle Autrichienne* had not required her waiting woman after ten o'clock at night. She let her servants go home, as she did not care to have them know what late hours she kept.

The morning after the attempted assassination, when the servants arrived they found a new master, and were informed that their mistress had suddenly departed for Paris, and would not require their services. All were discharged on the spot, with a gratuity of one month's extra wages. They were informed that the new master was von Beust's uncle, and would have his own servants by that afternoon's diligence.

Ohic was now the only servant in the house, but he was worth all the old tribe put together.

The reverend repaired to the restaurant and ordered a breakfast for twelve o'clock, and appointed eight o'clock for dinner.

At seven the doctor called, and found his patient awake. The latter was feverish and restless, but no more than would naturally be expected under the circumstances. The blood was in bad condition from heavy drinking, which would make the road to health longer.

That day the doctor was sent forty miles into the country to procure servants, strangers in Monaco, who would not wish to go into town. A cook, waiter, and chamber-maid were engaged, and were informed that there was a sick gentleman in the house who must not be disturbed, and that they were never to come up-stairs unless sent for.

So matters went on for three weeks. It was announced that Baron von Beust was very ill with gout in the stomach, and that

the Rev. Mr. Raymond, an old friend, had moved to the château to help nurse him. People could well believe the report of his illness ; it was known that he smoked and drank from morning until night.

Von Beust had very few acquaintances in Monaco. If people called, he was never "at home," and as he never returned visits, the callers soon ceased to trouble him.

But to go back a little in our story. When the Rev. Mr. Raymond gave the Italian boy the note to deliver to the commissary of police, the boy went as far as the office, and, seeing so many soldiers on guard, his heart failed him and he ran home without delivering the message, informing the reverend that he had carried out his orders. Thus the schooner escaped. The vessel had received orders to get ready to sail at a moment's notice some days before. Forged orders as from von Beust had been sent on board, and everything was ready, so that when the lady and the count got on board, the sails were hoisted and the cable at short stay.

"Get under way for the coast of Spain," said *la belle Autrichienne* to the first officer. "Here are Baron von Beust's orders ; he will follow us to Cadiz. This gentleman, Count Conti, will command."

To hear *la belle Autrichienne* was to obey. She had sailed in the schooner before, and issued all orders as to the course of the vessel.

In five minutes the vessel was under way, and slipping quietly out of the harbor. At daylight it was nowhere to be seen.

In the second week of von Beust's illness he was able to sit up dressed, and began to feel quite himself again. One day the reverend said to Mary, "Darling, I am going to introduce you to the sick man ; he wishes to make your acquaintance." He had told Mary none of the circumstances, or why he came there to nurse a stranger. Mary was one of those exceptional girls who believed that all her brother did was right, and desired to know nothing he did not wish to communicate to her, so that she had never seen the invalid. She did not even know his name, or that he was the husband of *la belle Autrichienne*.

She had never read the papers containing the account of Deville's marriage to Louise Morton, and could not account for the latter being at Monte Carlo. It was all a mystery to her, which she hoped would one day be explained.

One morning her brother came up to the library where she was sitting. "Come," he said, "the sick man is sitting up ; I am go-

ing to take you to see him, and give you a pleasant surprise." Taking her by the hand, Charles led her to his room.

There sat von Beust in a rich silk dressing-gown, without his tawny beard, which he had taken off, looking just as he did when Mary saw him at Hawks' Roost and knew him as James Deville, only he was paler and careworn. She recognized him immediately, and, springing forward, knelt at his feet. "Ah, dear brother!" she exclaimed, "found at last! O Charles! how could you keep me away from him so long? To think of my being in the house with you all this time without knowing it!" and she kissed his hand affectionately.

"My dear little friend," said von Beust, surprised at Mary's affectionate demonstration, "I thank God for this meeting," and he stooped and kissed her forehead. "Is it true you are Vere Saye's sister? Ah! what happiness to meet you! Would that you were my sister as well; but that you shall always be in spirit."

"But you are my brother James," said Mary, tears springing to her eyes. "Charles, doesn't he know it? Have you not told him everything? How miraculously we have all been united!"

"No, Mary," said Charles, "I have told him nothing. He only knows me as Vere Saye—the man who once did him an injury. Do you now tell him that I am not Vere Saye, whom he knew as such at Hawks' Roost, but Charles Gale, your brother and his. Ask him if he can not recall a little boy who played with him at an old man's side, with whom he once ran away from home and went to the circus, where both were stolen by a sailor, and afterward sold to a tight-rope dancer. Ask him if he remembers telling me once about the dear mother who used to hang over him and sing him to sleep, while her dove-like eyes beamed upon him like those of an angel from heaven. Tell him that our mother lives, and has found her long-lost husband, who was absent over twenty years, and was returned to her by the hand of Providence. Tell him that they only want his presence to make their latter years pass smoothly down the river of time. Tell him that we came to find him, and take him to a loving home, where warm embraces will repay him for all the hardships of his life. Tell him that he has father, mother, sister, and brother, who will love him as he was never loved before. Tell him, in fact—"

"Stop!" interrupted the supposed baron. "Am I dreaming, or are you mocking me? Am I not yet recovered from the fever that raised so many phantoms in my brain? Can it be that God has so

blessed me after my lone life and vagrant course? Shall I see those loved eyes of my mother again, and be able to call her by that sweet name? No! it is all a dream. Come here, sweet girl, and let me touch you to see if you are real flesh and blood."

Mary took his hand and said, with tears in her eyes, "Yes, I am your sister Mary, who was a baby when you were stolen away; you are James Gale, and this is our brother Charles."

James could no longer control himself, but took Mary in his arms and pressed her to his breast. "Thank God for this!" he said, sobbing; "thank God for a sight of land after being so long at sea! And you, brother—" seizing Charles's hand as he spoke—"welcome to my love as my other half. Bring me," he said, "the little trunk yonder; this is a strange story, which perhaps something in that trunk will substantiate."

The trunk was handed to him, and, unlocking it, he took out a small bundle and a picture-book.

"Look!" he said. "You were right; here is my name, written when I was a little boy; here are the clothes I wore when I was stolen, marked 'James Gale,' most likely by my dear mother herself—and she lives, you say! And here is the little cap I wore; it is marked C. G. What does that mean?"

"It means," replied his brother, "that we exchanged caps. I have the one that belonged to you. I have never parted with the clothes I wore when we were stolen."

"And you are my brother!" said James; "you whom I have loved ever since I first knew you, and whom I respected even when you did your duty so determinedly. I knew you then through your disguise; this last metamorphose of yours has completely deceived me. But my mind is weak, and sorrow has dulled my faculties. But you have more than redeemed that act by nursing and watching over me, and now in giving me an object to live for."

"Yes," said Charles Gale, "Mary and myself came across the ocean to find you and take you home to father and mother, who will die broken-hearted if they fail to see you."

James Gale rose from his chair and held them both to his breast. "Is there no mistake in this?" he said. "There," he exclaimed, looking in Mary's face, "are my mother's eyes. I felt their influence when first I saw them; but it all seems too good to be true, that I, of all men, should be so blessed."

"Do you require more convincing proof?" said Charles. He went out, and soon returned with a small parcel in his hand. Open-

ing it, he said, "These tiny clothes and cap are the counterpart of yours. This little handkerchief marked 'Mary' was in my pocket when I left my mother's house. If you want still further proof, you have the figure of a mouse on your right arm above the elbow, as I have on mine."

"I can doubt no more," replied James; "but what good will all this be to me unless my parents join me in Europe? I can not go to America, where I am so disgraced, and where the hand of the law would be laid upon me as soon as I landed. My name is a by-word all over the United States, and, go where I would, I should be known. No, the joy of embracing father and mother is denied me, and I must wander over this lone world like the wandering Jew. I have forfeited all claim to the happiness you hold out to me. I sinned with my eyes open, and must pay the penalty. I must lie in the bed I have made for myself, and will try and do so without a murmur. But, believe me, I am not the monster of crime I am represented. I am bound by an oath which I can not break, and hence I can not reveal all the facts connected with my case. If I committed crime, it was because I felt a contempt for the world generally, and to repay it for its foul treatment of me. My contempt was especially given to those in high places. If by my wits I got the better of the rich, I gave to the poor in abundance. That does not justify me in all my dealings, but it was from the rich and powerful that I received my first injustice and disgrace.

"I was first unjustly accused and condemned in a French court, against all the rules of evidence, and sent to herd with felons, such as the outside world has no conception of. For two long years I was chained to a monster of crime, who instilled into me the most debased ideas his depraved nature was capable of. You may say that my superior education should have given me the advantage over him, and enabled me to convert him. You might as well try to make a missionary out of a tiger of the jungle. I had no education to begin with. I was stolen away from my mother ere the seeds of virtue were implanted in my heart, or if any were planted they took no root, or the plants ran up to weeds. All my life I have been thrown with debased characters; how could I be other than I was?"

"I know your whole history," said Charles. "I was in Paris at your trial, and my heart pronounced you guiltless. But no more of this; forget it all and be happy."

"How, under all these dreadful circumstances," continued James, "could I have a chance to imbibe pure principles, when all my life I have been drinking from polluted streams? Those who are so willing to punish do not know how easy it is to commit sin, and how hard to do good. Crime seems so fascinating that sometimes I think we have reversed things, and that it was intended sin should be set among the virtues. Until one pays the first penalty he is hardly able to understand how great a sinner he is.

"There is no kind hand held out to save a sinner when he does fall. There is no sympathy for him even in the kindest breast. He is hooted at by the mob as if he were a wild animal, and thus driven to commit further crimes. The very men who hold high positions, and whose hands are steeped in crime, are the loudest in their denunciations against him. They forget, while holding the wealth of the Indies in their hands, how little temptation they have to sin, and should have charity for the fallen. All know from experience how much trouble it is to follow the strait path, and how often they slip into a wicked one. It is such as these that I have been warring upon.

"When a man sees another standing at the head of society, and hears him lauded to the skies for virtues he does not possess, it makes him doubt his fellow-creatures. Such a man is often one who is steeped in iniquity. I know many such. Again, there are men who are really virtuous, and who would be ornaments to society if they were allowed to be, but are driven to starvation because they scorn to do evil. The latter will naturally argue, What is the use of being virtuous? It is so much easier to be criminal. As long as one is not found out it pays twice as well. And such people are patronized by the greater and smoother scoundrels when they can make themselves useful to them.

"Now there was a man in New York thought by every one to be immaculate. His word was worth more than any other's bond. Do you know the great banker Morton? Well, I could tell things of him the world would not believe. Strict as I was in all my bank affairs, and as well as I stood with the public, I would not pretend to make my word go further than his. No matter what I might know ill of him, I would not attempt to contend with him or bring a charge against him any more than I would attempt to fly. If I did so, I should go to the wall, and he would set all his machinery in motion and 'stamp me out.' That man used my name for three hundred thousand dollars without asking my leave to do so; and

when I demurred to the fraud, he held out, as a bait to me, his beautiful daughter, knowing my great passion for her. 'Compound a felony,' he said, 'and take your reward; attempt to expose me, and I will crush you.'

"How could I follow the path of virtue when I saw men in high places daily commit crimes which, if fixed upon them, would send them to the penitentiary?—at least, would send an ordinary man there who had committed sin to save a suffering family. Ah! you may talk of using the most beautiful and fanciful flies to catch a trout, but if you want to catch the wildest man, bait your hook with a beautiful woman. When such men as Morton die, the public erect monuments to their memory. I suppose he is still flourishing in crime which his gentlemanly appearance would prevent any one from suspecting.

"That man Morton owes me four hundred thousand dollars, which I let him have without any security, and which at one time he pretended he had forgotten, and, full of passion for the vile creature I afterward married, I forgot it also. I do not suppose he would pay me three cents on the dollar, if I should ask him, and the amount of my loan will nowhere appear on his books."

"Handle his name gingerly, if you please, brother," said Charles Gale; "that man is our uncle. His Nemesis at last overtook him, and he had to retire from business a ruined man. His bank is now conducted under the name of Morton & Gale. Your father is the nominal head of the establishment, and I am the actual one, with Harry Morton—who is to marry our dear sister—as my partner. Morton senior was forced to retire to save his name and escape a term of years in the penitentiary; so you see your ideas of matters are wrong. Sin will be found out in time, no matter how many safeguards the wicked may throw around them. But your money is all safe in bank, and properly credited on our books."

"You amaze me," said James. "If I were to appear before Morton to-morrow, and he retain his old standing, he would denounce me to the authorities, to show what Roman virtue he possessed. He could well post my account, with him knowing I could never call for it. I shall now begin to think there is such a thing as retribution. How was Morton brought to justice? Where is he serving out his time?"

"On his estates in Ireland, with plenty of dollars to cheer him up," answered Charles, laughing. "Why, my dear brother, your offenses are nothing compared to his."

"But how did all this come to pass?"

"It is a long story, James, but you shall hear it all in time. To come back to yourself. You can return to New York in perfect safety, as there is no evidence against you beyond what I hold. Jacob Moses is dead, and none of the other men who confederated with you will run the risk of putting their heads in a halter, even if they could identify you as their accomplice in crime."

"I never committed the crimes you mention," said James, "though others did. But I can not explain; I am bound by the strongest oath."

"So much the better; then you are doubly secure from arrest, if you go home with Mary and myself, to claim your four hundred thousand dollars in the Morton & Gale bank."

"I have lost all right to the money," said James; "I relinquished it when I gave up my manhood and compounded a felony, and then married Morton's daughter. But since you assure me I can go home in safety, I will do so, and embrace my dear parents before I die. I have fifty thousand dollars in ferry stock, which can be sold for my benefit without my appearing in the matter. That is all I shall need in this world for the rest of my life, which will be a short one. I long to die."

"Folly!" said Charles; "you don't know how much happiness is in store for you, and how little prospect there is at present of your dying. Now listen to my plans. You will leave here to-morrow night, under charge of the doctor, who will leave you safely and comfortably lodged at a village twenty-five miles from here."

"The funeral of the late Baron von Beust will take place on the doctor's return. I shall follow as chief mourner. A handsome coffin, weighted with sand, and Baron von Beust, *Robert le Diable*, and James Deville will be buried for ever six feet underground. You will henceforth change your style, and we will travel as twin brothers. Mary shall appear as her own sweet self, and will have to discard that raging blonde hair. No one in the world will recognize us."

"That would be great happiness," replied James Gale, "and if I can only live to see once more the beautiful eyes of my mother, which looked in mine so lovingly in childhood, I shall die contented."

Those three people spent all that day together, and James learned all the events connected with the wonderful reunion of his

family. "Brother," said he, "you are the most wonderful man I ever heard of. I only hope that if I had not been thrown in the first place among criminals, and been infected by their example, I might have turned out as good a man as yourself."

"You are as good if not a better man than I am, James. I have known you two years, and have witnessed your many noble acts. I know you now abhor crime, and will always lead an honorable life. The angels in heaven rejoice more over one tear of repentance from an erring sinner than they do over the souls of the best and most beautiful that live in fear of God. You shall return home as the prodigal son, and the fatted calf shall be killed for you. Father and mother shall know you only as the immaculate James Gale, and we will all unite to teach you how to forget the sorrows of the past. You will literally be born again of a new spirit."

"I see," said James; "I now have hopes of peace and happiness."

At midnight, when the servants of the château were fast asleep, the doctor drove up to the door in a large, close, and easy carriage, and took the baron away, returning in time next day for the mock funeral.

Notice had been given the day before of the baron's decease, and his acquaintances in Monaco invited to attend.

The doctor had given a certificate of death to the police commissary to the effect that the baron had died of gout in the stomach. As his habits were well known, and he had no intimates, no questions were asked.

Few attended the funeral, and the coffin was interred in the foreigners' cemetery. *Requiescat in pace.*

The same evening the doctor received from his employer a draft for ten thousand francs, with which he bought his doctor's cart, tiger's suit, and other professional necessities; and so well did he prosper as to eventually become the leading physician in Monaco.

CHAPTER LIX.

RETRIBUTION.

CHARLES and Mary Gale disappeared from Monaco on the night of the funeral of von Beust, and were heard of no more in that ancient town. The doctor was furnished with money to settle all accounts, and Charles and Mary joined their brother James, with whom they remained incognito until James was able to travel.

When they left the village it was at night, in a coach and four, but they were all so changed in appearance that none of their Monaco acquaintances would have recognized them.

They now proceeded to Switzerland, where they spent several months and were known as "the handsome Americans." The two young men were called "Castor and Pollux," owing to their being so much alike. They dressed alike, even to the smallest details, and at a little distance even Mary could scarcely distinguish one from the other. When near them she could see the different expressions of their faces, James looking at times very sad. Charles, who secretly mourned over the abduction of Flossy, although sure that he should recover her again, nearly always looked grave and preoccupied.

One day, when they were all sitting quietly looking out on beautiful Lake Constance, James broke the silence by saying, "Charles, you promised me that I should go to Paris and expose the murderer of Count Cassarole. Let us start soon, for I am impatient to unmask the Count of Montebello."

"Agreed!" said Charles; "we will start as soon as you please. I have only been waiting until our whiskers grew out so that we would be less apt to be recognized. Remember, we have a smart rascal to contend with, and he might make you out even after the lapse of eight years. Of course he knows of your escape from the hulks, and the reward offered for your apprehension. He is doubtless on the lookout for your return to Paris, either to have you arrested before you can mature your plans, or to prevent you from taking vengeance on him personally, which probably he fears the most. I am anxious that you shall stand acquitted before the world of that foul crime, and also have the murderer brought to justice."

In a month the whole party, Chic included, were settled in Paris.

They took rooms near the Hôtel Cassarole, where they could observe everything that was going on without subjecting themselves to suspicion. The house had a flat roof, on which Charles had a small room constructed, where he mounted a telescope that could look all over the neighborhood.

It had now been eight years since the Count of Montebello and the Marchioness of Cassarole had been married, and although there was some talk for a time about the manner in which their wedding was hurried and doubts expressed as to the guilt of the handsome *Robert le Diable*, yet people's tongues were soon silenced by invitations to the countess's gorgeous receptions, which were regularly held once a week.

The marchioness had no sooner married Montebello than she found out what a detestable character he was, and she sighed for her old Cassarole, who allowed her to do as she pleased without inquiring into her movements. She would have retired from society and hidden her disappointment and remorse in her boudoir, but this the Count of Montebello would by no means permit. He harassed her to death by expressing fears of detection, and at the time of the arrival of the Gales in Paris the Hôtel Cassarole and its inmates were in an unhappy frame of mind.

Charles Gale, through detectives, informed himself of many facts concerning the family, and at the end of a week he said to James, "I am ready; let us hand the count over to the hands of justice. I have a theory that when persons commit great crimes Providence always leaves some clew by which they can be detected. In the excitement of a murder some letter is apt to be stowed away and forgotten, to turn up, perhaps, years afterward. A murderer generally does something by which he can be detected, and it can be discovered if a rigid search is made. In this case no questions were ever asked by the police authorities about the precipitate manner in which these two people were married. They felt so secure that they were imprudent, and I will wager that I have the right clew."

James Gale's eyes sparkled. "I would almost be willing to serve another two years in the galleys," he said, "if I could see that man convicted."

"Here, Chic," said Charles, "here are two hundred and fifty francs. Go to a good tailor and have the handsomest page's suit

made that money can purchase. Let it be ready by day after tomorrow. Collect together all the letters of recommendation you have received from time to time. Now make haste !”

“I find,” said Charles to his brother, “that Montebello is now absent from Paris, and will return in three or four days. By that time I trust we shall know all that we require.”

Chic did not lose a moment. He called at the establishment of M. Egeville and was measured for a suit of maroon velvet with white cuffs and collar, the suit trimmed with gold bell-buttons, with white cassimere pantaloons with gold cord down the seams, laced cravat, standing collar, and kid gloves.

Chic then went to a hatter's and procured a rich maroon velvet cap, with gold cord and tassel, and to a bootmaker's, where he was fitted to a handsome pair of patent leathers. Then he bought a handsome cane and went home. “I need a small watch, sir,” said he to his master, “which will cost forty francs more, and my costume will be complete.” Chic's request was granted, and he purchased a watch about the size of a five-franc piece, and a silver gilt chain to match.

The second day the clothes were brought ; they fitted Chic to perfection. When he was dressed the tailor said, “There's nothing like that in all Paris. The Countess de Montebello, or the Marchioness Fautenille, would give five thousand francs to have this boy as a page. They would be the envy of all Paris.”

“Ah !” said Charles Gale, “do they deal in such curiosities ?”

“Yes,” said the tailor ; “the Countess of Montebello lost her page a short time since with typhoid fever, and she has not replaced him yet. He was twice the size of this marmoset.”

“Well,” said Charles, “neither of them will get him ; he belongs to my sister.”

At eleven o'clock that morning Chic presented himself at the front door of the Hôtel Cassarole and rang the bell, which he had great trouble in reaching.

When a waiter came to the door and saw the little fellow, he said, “*Que Diable !* where did this *mouche* drop from ? Well, my young Hercules, have you come to carry off the palace ?”

“If you don't mind your manners,” said Chic, in his very best French, “I will thrash you within an inch of your life.” At which the waiter burst out laughing.

“*Quel enfant !* madam will grieve no more for Justin if she can get you.”

"I am not so easy to get," said Chic; "the Marchioness Fautenille is in treaty for me, and I assure you I do not hold myself cheap."

"Come in! come in!" said the waiter. "The countess must see this *drôle*; she will be happy once more;" and he bowed to Chic with mock humility. "Walk this way, *M. le général*. *Madame la Comtesse* will be charmed to see you."

"Ah, you rascal!" said Chic, "I thought the sight of my cane would teach you manners. Look out when I get into this house. If you don't bow to the ground every time you pass me I will have your wages reduced."

"Yes, *M. le Ministre*," said the waiter, "I obey your Highness's orders to the letter, and if your Majesty will please wait one minute I will notify the countess of your presence." And he bumped the floor with his head three times with what he called *le grand coup*!

"*Quel drôle!*" continued the waiter; "the palace will be alive again, and madam will at length forget the old Count Cassarole."

"Ah, *Madame la Comtesse*," said the waiter when he entered the presence of the countess, "here is the drollest little monkey of a page I ever laid eyes on. He is only three feet high, and can't weigh more than a fair-sized chicken."

The countess was seated looking into the fire, her feet resting on the fender. Her once gorgeous beauty had disappeared; her mouth was drawn down at the corners, her hair had turned gray. Nemesis was sitting at her side. Remorse had done its work as it always will, and the countess was now a pitiable woman, to whom death would have been a mercy.

The countess did not heed the waiter at first, and he stood for some minutes waiting her orders. At length she raised her head. "Show the person in," she said, "but tell him I only give three minutes to any one. Tell him to say what he has to say and be gone."

The waiter opened the door and motioned to Chic, who entered the apartment with a low bow. The countess still maintained her position, when Chic, approaching, knelt humbly before her.

The countess raised her eyes and started. "Mon Dieu!" she exclaimed, "what is this? *Quel drôle!*" and her face for the first time in years was lighted up with a smile.

"Yes, madam," said the waiter, "I thought this would bring a smile to your face. This is his Majesty the *Pshaw* of Persia, who awaits your permission to speak."

"This exceeds all I ever dreamed of," said the countess. "Who sent you here, boy? What is your name? Rise, and let me look at you."

"My name is Chic, madam, at your service."

"Whose page are you?"

"Madame the Countess's, if she wills it; if not, I must die of a broken heart," and Chic bowed to the floor.

"Go, Frederic," said the countess to the waiter; "you are not wanted." The latter departed to the servants' hall to tell his companions about the wonderful page *Madame la Comtesse* was about engaging.

"Who sent you here, Chic?" asked the countess, her cold, steely eye watching his countenance.

"Nobody, madam. I was recommended to go to the Marchioness Fautenille, but, *ma foi*, just as I went to her door she was getting into her carriage with a fat pug dog. 'Wait,' said I to myself, 'let me inquire,' and I stopped until the carriage drove away. 'Hey!' said I to the servant at the door, 'is that pug any relation of yours?' 'No,' he replied, 'you mosquito; if it were I would choke it.' 'Is it amiable?' I asked. 'Do tigers sing lullabies?' he replied. 'Of course,' said I, 'your mistress never lets her page touch it?' 'Don't she though?' said he; 'she made her page, when she had one, give him a rose-water bath at seven o'clock every morning. At eight pug had his coffee, at eleven his breakfast, consisting of an omelet of canary-birds' eggs. At one o'clock his lunch was served, consisting of oat-meal pudding and lady-fingers. At two o'clock pug took his *siesta*, the page standing by to keep off the flies. At three o'clock pug took his promenade, when the page carried him gently to the park. At four, to drive with madam, the page in the mean time having to inspect its bed for fleas. At five, first supper, lady-fingers and three drops of cordial in a teaspoonful of water. At six, page took pug to the drawing-room and placed him on a cushion near my lady. At seven he gave pug a bath of milk and rose-water, put him to bed, and fanned him until he went to sleep. Page was never allowed to complain when pug bit him, which he frequently did. Ten pages in succession ran away or committed suicide. The last one escaped to America, and there is now a vacancy. Walk in, and wait until *Madame la Marquise* returns.' 'No, thank you,' said I, 'I prefer committing suicide with a hair-pin.'"

The Countess Montebello was actually laughing.

"Besides, *Madame la Comtesse*," continued Chic, "the marchioness is not pretty; she is shaped like an elephant's leg all the way down. I like a good figure. I saw *Madame la Comtesse*, and after that how could I like *Madame la Marquise*? She has not an aristocratic look, and I like aristocracy. Her horses' tails are not banged. Well, *que voulez-vous*?"

"Chic," said the countess, "I shall die a-laughing if you go on so. What is your method with regard to your duties?"

"My method," replied Chic, "is to please my mistress. If she is sad, I make her smile; if she is ill, I pray for her recovery, and I think of everything that will be of service to her. I stand by her side at meals, and see that the cook has them ready at the minute. I threaten the servants if they are not perfectly obedient. I do all I am told to do, am never seen when not wanted, and, at the sound of my mistress's bell, I pop up out of the floor at her side. I know whom she likes and whom she doesn't like, and keep the latter away from her. I get her light for her before she goes to bed, and the last thing I do is to mix her absinthe. When she retires, I sleep at her door with my sword and pistols."

"Do all the ladies you have served take absinthe, Chic?" inquired the countess.

"Yes, *Madame la Comtesse*, it is the very water of Lethe. In drinking it one forgets all one's sorrows."

"Tell me, whom have you served?"

"Only American ladies, *Madame la Comtesse*, and I never serve any but the most beautiful."

"*Tant mieux!* And who was your last mistress?"

"The beautiful Miss Gale, sister to the great New York banker. She sails in a few days for home, and I want to see a little more of Paris."

"What do you expect for wages, Chic?"

"Wages, *Madame la Comtesse!*" exclaimed Chic, in surprise. "That is an idea that never entered my head. I take it for granted that my mistress would like to see me dressed well, and if she thinks proper to present me with an occasional souvenir, I accept it thankfully, and love my mistress none the less if the present is small. But wages, madam, no; I am an American!"

"Chic, you are a treasure, and shall live with me as long as my life lasts."

Chic knelt and kissed her hand, which the countess graciously permitted him to do. Then he rose and began to arrange every-

thing in the room, placed the easy-chairs so that the boudoir would look more cheerful, smoothed out the cushions, shook the curtains so that they would hang gracefully, put all the bric-à-brac in order, arranged the light through the windows, put some wood on the fire, and swept the hearth.

The countess watched him closely while he was thus employed. "*Ah, ciel!*" she said to herself, "this is a new life," and she presently dropped into a light slumber.

When the countess awoke and looked around, Chic was nowhere to be seen. She rang the bell, and he was instantly by her side—as if he had risen through the floor—with a canary-bird sitting on his finger.

"Where were you, Chic, when I rang the bell? Are you a fairy, that you can come and go in an instant?"

"I came from behind your chair, madam," replied Chic, "where I was teaching your canary to dance. He will be able to fire a pistol in a week."

"*Ah, mon Dieu!*" exclaimed the countess, "what a prize the boy is! Go now, child, and make acquaintance with the servants; look after them a little, and let me know if things go wrong."

"Yes, *Madame la Comtesse*. You have one good man here, Frederic. He spoke of you to me to-day in a beautiful manner. 'The countess is an angel,' he said; 'make her smile, and I will worship you.' What wages does he get, *Madame la Comtesse?*"

"Seventy-five francs a month, Chic. Is not that sufficient?"

"No, madam," replied Chic; "he is worth a hundred, if only for the sincere affection he feels for you. May I not tell him that hereafter his wages will be one hundred francs?"

"Yes, Chic, if it will please you," replied the countess, and Chic bowed himself out.

The first person whom he encountered was Frederic, walking up and down the hall, in readiness to answer the door-bell.

"Ah, you rascal!" said Chic to him, "what have you to say why I should not break every bone in your body? Don't you think I understood your sneer when you called me the *Pshaw* of Persia? The next time you amuse yourself at my expense I will throw you over the house."

Frederic went down on his knees, pretending to be very much frightened. "Ah! spare me, General Vashington," he cried.

"Rise!" said Chic; "I won't thrash you this time. You are not a bad fellow, and have won my heart by speaking so hand-

somely of your mistress. She is an angel if ever there was one. Now see what I have done for you. Your mistress has allowed me to increase your wages to a hundred francs a month."

Frederic picked Chic up with one hand, put him on his shoulder, and marched with him to the kitchen, where the servants were assembled, discussing the outrageous conduct of the countess in getting a new page, who would run, and tell her every time any of them drank an extra cup of chocolate.

"Here's a page after my own heart!" exclaimed Frederic; "he has hardly been an hour in the house, and has had my wages increased to one hundred francs. There's a little prince for you; very different from the lick-spittle we had here last."

The servants gathered around Chic. The cook shook him by the hand, the pretty chamber-maid kissed him, and he promised in less than a week to have all their wages increased. Then he made himself very agreeable, although he did threaten to break the coachman's back for calling him Tom Thumb. He adroitly drew from the servants all he wanted to know: where they slept, when they went to bed, where the master of the house slept, whether or not a watch was kept, and, lastly, whether his mistress was wakeful at night, and was likely to call him up often.

To this last inquiry the servants answered in chorus, "No! After taking her absinthe," said they, "the countess never moves again until next day at noon, when she takes breakfast in her boudoir."

"You know," said Chic, "I am to sleep at her bedroom door, with my sword and pistols"; and taking from his pocket a little pistol, he fired it at a plaster-of-Paris parrot on the dresser, and knocked its eye out. "If I find any one moving about the house after hours," said he, "I shall be very apt to send a ball through him."

"Don't fear," said they all; "at twelve o'clock we are snoozing."

Chic then inquired his mistress's hours for meals, and was told that it was then time for her luncheon—a very light meal the countess took at this hour. He had the luncheon put upon a silver waiter, with the handsomest china in the house, and sent the gardener to the hot-house for a bouquet of roses.

When all was ready Chic said, "Come, Fred, take it up; I will follow, and attend the countess while she eats. The sight of a great fellow like you is enough to take away a lady's appetite. Don't forget to bow to the floor when you leave the room."

In a moment more Chic was in the countess's room, with Frederic carrying the tray. The countess smiled when her luncheon was placed on the table, for she had not seen so inviting a meal for a long time. When Frederic bowed himself out she looked surprised. She had not been treated with such respect since the death of Count Cassarole, who was a chevalier of the old school, and required the greatest courtesy shown to the mistress of the house. Montebello, on the other hand, was a brute, who filled the palace, when at home, with brawlers and hard drinkers, and cared not with how little respect his wife was treated.

"*Madame la Comtesse*," said Chic, "the house has a musty smell. Shall I have it aired? The servants tell me the windows have not been opened since the count left."

"Yes, Chic," she said; and as he left the room she thought to herself, "What a jewel that boy is!"

In ten minutes Chic was going with Frederic all over the house, opening doors and windows, and looking into all the corners and out-of-the-way places. In an hour the garrulous Frederic had let him into all the mysteries of the Hôtel Cassarole.

When night came Chic gave the countess her tea, and at bedtime he mixed her absinthe, taking care to drop therein a little white powder he had brought with him. He then lighted the candles in the countess's bedroom, and bowed respectfully as she passed in to retire for the night. "Ah!" she thought to herself, "that boy is a wonder. The very sight of him gives me new life"; and she bade him good-night, locking her door.

Chic then called the chamber-maid to bring his little cot bedstead and place it before the countess's door. As he bade the girl good-night he ostentatiously laid his pistols on a chair.

At eleven o'clock everything was quiet in the palace, and the lights were out. But Chic wanted to be certain before going to work. He took off his shoes, and, lighting a candle, opened the door leading to the entry and went out. He went all over the house and found everything quiet. Then he returned to the countess's door and waited. Listening at the key-hole, he heard the countess breathing heavily; the powder had taken effect.

He then took from his pocket a small pair of steel nippers, turned the key and opened the door. He approached the countess's bed, shading the candle with his hand. What a wan, faded figure was before him! Her hair now showed its natural color of gray, her face without its paint was chalky, and she wore a look of grief

and misery such as can not be described. Whatever she had been once, she was no beauty now. But Chic had little time to dwell on her appearance. He paused to see if she were sound asleep, and, satisfied of this fact, he applied himself to business.

He rummaged for an hour before coming across anything to repay his search. At last he found in a closet an old leather desk. On opening it with a false key, it was apparently empty. He shook it to see if anything was concealed, and heard something rattling within, but for the life of him could not tell where it was. At length he found a concealed drawer in the end of the desk, and with some trouble got it open, revealing a package of letters addressed to the Countess Cassarole. He could find nothing more, so he locked the desk and returned it to its place.

Shading the light with his hand, he again approached the bed. Great Heavens! the countess was sitting upright in bed with closed eyes, pointing toward the closet. Her lips moved, and she spoke incoherently and in a low voice. She soon, however, lay down again, and sank into a deep sleep.

Before Chic departed he took another look around the room, and discovered that there was a double door to it, and that there were heavily quilted curtains over the windows. What could this mean?

He visited next the count's apartment. It was gorgeously upholstered, and in a buffet was a plentiful supply of wine, brandy, and cigars. He lighted a candle and sat down to read his instructions, which Charles Gale had given him in writing. "First, secure all letters to and from the count or countess for the past twelve years. Second, search diligently for a small boring-bit used in forcing the doors leading into the Count Cassarole's apartments at the time he was murdered, a chisel for shooting the bolts, and a pair of nippers for unlocking the door. As soon as you find anything, bring it to me."

"I think I know what he wants," said Chic to himself as he resumed his search. It was past two o'clock when he commenced work in the count's room, but he thought he had already collected enough for a beginning, and would finish the job another night.

He had some trouble in forcing the doors in the count's room, although well provided with skeleton keys. There were at least a dozen small trunks in a closet, all of them locked, and Chic went through them rapidly. He threw all the letters he could find into a pillow-case and replaced the trunks as he found them. The bor-

ing-bit, nippers, and chisel he found in an old trunk stowed in a secret closet only two feet wide, which would have defied almost anybody but Chic. He also found a small bottle of poison, with a few drops remaining in it.

In going out of the room he noticed on a table a plain pistol-case and a long steel dagger in a case. He put the dagger between the cracks of the door and broke it off within half an inch of the handle, and put the blade and handle in the scabbard, apparently whole. He then drew the balls from the pistols and closed the door. In ten minutes more Chic had run across the street with his pillow-case full of letters, delivered them to his master, and returned to his bed. When the servants came down in the morning Chic was sound asleep, and they came to the conclusion that he was a very lazy boy.

There was nothing Chic did not do to please his mistress. He actually kept her laughing continually. The servants did not know what to make of it, although now and then the countess would burst into a terrible fit of crying.

It took Charles Gale nearly all day to examine the letters Chic had brought him. He evidently thought he had obtained what was necessary, for at four o'clock he repaired to the office of his old friend the prefect of police, whom he had not seen for nearly three years.

The prefect soon recognized him. "Ah! my friend Allan Dare, where have you been? Have you come to work with me again? I can not get along without you."

"No, my dear sir," replied Charles Gale, "I leave in a few days, but before I go I want to convict the Count of Montebello and his wife of the murder of old Count Cassarole, and obtain a pardon for that young *Robert le Diable* who was unjustly convicted and sentenced to the galleys for life."

"Why, man!" exclaimed the prefect, "you go to business quickly. You are the same old fellow—no time to talk, and I have a thousand things to talk to you about."

"The sooner I do my business," said Charles, "the more time I will have to talk. That innocent man ought not to suffer a moment, now that it is found that justice has made a mistake."

"But, man alive!" replied the prefect, "the fellow escaped from the galleys years ago."

"Nevertheless, he suffers. The law is always hanging over his head, and he dreads being arrested."

"*Papt!*" said the prefect; "no doubt *M. le Diable* has committed a dozen crimes since then. He made the most miraculous escape on record, and swam out to sea. A vessel picked him up, and the captain, finding that he was an escaped convict, tried to detain him as the vessel was entering the harbor of Tunis. Robert knocked down every man in the vessel as fast as they approached him, hoisted out the launch by himself, went ashore, and concealed himself in the ruins of Carthage. The captain, who was a brave man, went ashore to look for him, and *Robert le Diable* killed him and all but one of his crew. The survivor informed the captain of a French frigate of the facts, and, while he went to see the bey, the seraskier, pacha, the grand ulema, French consul, and half a dozen other functionaries, *Robert le Diable* went to Marsa and stole the bey's pet lioness."

Charles Gale laughed heartily.

"Yes," said the prefect, "we have it all in the books. Robert taught this lioness to be fond of him, and coaxed her to the sea, stole a large fishing-boat from among the fishermen, and made his escape. The Bey of Tunis would give his finest diamond for that lioness."

"Don't you think any man would escape, under the circumstances, if he could?" asked Charles. "As to the lioness, she is pretty old, and the bey is dead—so he doesn't want her."

"Then," continued the prefect, trying not to hear him, "Robert made his way to sea, the frigate in chase, but he managed to elude the latter. At night he boarded an American brig, forcing himself and the lioness on the ship's company. He went to Brazil in the brig, behaving most outrageously on the voyage. When the vessel reached Rio de Janeiro, the captain, finding that *Robert le Diable* was an escaped convict, reported him to the government, and *M. Robert* was sent to the diamond-mines; and just as the French Government were about to get hold of him again, the English Government claimed him as a deserter. If it had not been for that lioness we never would have heard from him after he left Tunis. Did you ever hear of such a rascal in your life?"

"Yes," replied Charles, "I have heard of several. You forget that this man was unjustly condemned to the galleys. He is innocent as a child."

"Eh, what?" exclaimed the prefect. "Innocent! well, what next? Though I remember you were always right. You said some-

thing, if I am not mistaken, about the Countess Cassarole and the Count of Montebello."

"I said," replied Charles Gale, "that they were the real murderers of the Count Cassarole, and I bring the proof with me. Here it is, all arranged in order—viz.: twenty love-letters between the Count of Montebello and Countess Cassarole during the life of her husband; four letters that passed between them arranging the plot, and showing how *Robert le Diable* was to be implicated; six letters, written within the last two years by Montebello, threatening the countess that if she were not more careful to conceal her remorse he would confine her in an insane asylum; two letters from the countess threatening Montebello with exposure unless he treated her better, in which she mentions his attempting to poison her; and finally the instruments used with which to open Count Cassarole's doors. By opening the holes that were bored by this bit in order to shoot the bolts, you will find in one of them the point of the bit, which you will notice is wanting here. This is all."

The prefect looked dazed. He examined the letters and the instruments. "My good sir," he exclaimed, "the young man must be pardoned at once; he should not be allowed to stay in prison a day."

"You forget that he pardoned himself. He would have been a dead man ere this if he had stayed in the galleys."

"It was his duty to have stayed there until justice came to release him; the law never makes mistakes that it is not willing to correct."

"I will leave you for the present," said Charles, "you can read those letters at your leisure, and if anything else is lacking, here is the confession of the Countess of Montebello, made three years ago. She did not know at what time this man Montebello might take her life, and she left her confession in an old desk, where she could point it out at the hour of death. Remorse grew too heavy for her, and she prayed for death. It is a detestable story, sir."

"Well, well, truth is stranger than fiction! I will call at your lodgings as soon as I get through the papers. Where are you living?"

"I am living with my brother in the Rue d'Or, opposite the Hôtel Cassarole; but, before I go, give me a discharge for *Robert le Diable*. I may encounter the poor fellow, and in that case can give it to him. You can have a regular pardon issued afterward from the Palace of Justice."

"I will," answered the prefect, and, sitting down, he wrote a full discharge for *Robert le Diable*.

"There is one thing more I wish to mention," said Charles. "The Count of Montebello returns home to-night. I have a detective in his house who has drawn the bullets from the count's pistols, and broken off the blade from his dagger, and, though he is a desperate villain, your men will have little to fear from him. My man will have the front door open at ten, and will show your people the way to the count's apartment. Good-morning."

The prefect read the letters and the Countess of Montebello's confession, and at five o'clock went to call on Allan Dare. He rang the bell, and was shown up-stairs by the servant, and, when the door opened, he saw a beautiful young woman sitting between two handsome men, so alike in every respect, even to the cut and color of their clothes, that the prefect was dumfounded.

The lady and the gentlemen rose, and Mary said, "Is it either of these gentlemen you desire to see?"

"I really don't know which one I want," said the prefect; "this is witchcraft."

Charles Gale here took his brother's hand and led him forward. "Let me introduce to *M. le Prefect, Robert le Diable*, whom you sent to the galleys some years ago, and have now discharged."

"But," said the prefect, drawing himself up, "there are other high crimes of which he is accused."

"There is not a word of truth in the story," said James Gale, who thereupon gave the prefect a short account of his career, to which that functionary listened with attention.

"And yet," said the prefect, "they have it all written down in our criminal register. I see, Allan, how it is; this world is given to lying, and some of the understrappers, who did not want the matter brought home to them, have thrown all possible difficulties in the way. Well, this is the strangest affair I ever heard of, and I suppose this is the brother of whom you used formerly to talk to me about, for certainly never were two men so much alike."

"The same," replied Charles Gale, who then told the prefect the story of finding his father, mother, and sister, and of recovering from his rascally uncle the property of which they had been defrauded. "At present," said Charles Gale, "I am the richest banker in New York."

We could not attempt to repeat all the conversation that took place. The prefect had his hands full that evening, and so had

the brothers. At eight o'clock the prefect departed to prepare for the arrest of the Count of Montebello, who was to arrive in Paris at ten o'clock.

At the hour above named Chic was sitting with the countess, trying to amuse her, for she required constant amusement to keep down remorse. When by herself she could not help thinking constantly of her murdered husband, and drawing comparisons between him and the wretch who now controlled her destiny, and who treated her with the greatest brutality.

That was the reason why the doors of her boudoir were double, and quilted curtains hung over the window-panes. The countess's sufferings were all told in her confession, and were afterward published. Yet Chic could make her forget them for the time being.

She had actually been laughing at one of Chic's humorous sallies, and had raised her chocolate-cup to her mouth, when the door was suddenly flung open and the count stood in the doorway. The countess did not know when her husband would come, and he might have remained in the house for a month without making any inquiry about her had he not heard laughing in her boudoir just as he entered the front door.

Her holding communication with anybody in that house during his absence was against his orders. She might receive all the world at a ball or reception, when powdered and painted and wreathed in forced smiles, but she was forbidden to receive any one in his absence.

So certain was he of her obedience that he kept no watch over her. She knew the penalty of disobedience, and knew that he would exact it. He would allow her to drive through the streets, or in the *Bois de Boulogne*, but nowhere else. She was allowed to drive out only at certain times, and must stop and talk to no one. The footman was a spy of the count's, and would inform him instantly of any infraction of his orders, and she would then pay the penalty.

When the count flung open the door he did not at first see Chic, who was so small. The countess supposed that her husband was two hundred miles away, and when she saw him she shrank like a stricken deer. Her face grew, if possible, more pallid than ever.

Chic saw the devil in the count's eye, but he could not imagine what he would do. The count walked quickly to the countess and touched her on the shoulder. "What does this mean?" he inquired.

"This is my new page," answered the countess.

"Boy," said the count, addressing Chic, "leave the house instantly, and let me hear the street-door close behind you as you depart."

Chic lost no time in obeying the order, not wishing to have his neck broken, but he only went as far as the front door, opened it, and slammed it, and then slipped under a large bench in the hall.

The count then took the countess by the shoulder. "Come," he said, "don't keep me waiting!"

She rose and staggered toward the door, making no appeal for mercy, for she knew none would be given her, and went, as directed, to her bedroom.

Montebello took her by the neck—that swan-like neck old Count Cassarole so much admired—and threw her violently to the floor, where he left her, double-locking the doors behind him. He then went to his own room and closed the door.

At that moment Chic softly opened the street-door and admitted the prefect and four *gens d'armes*, who walked to the count's room and entered it just as the count was pouring out a glass of brandy.

"I arrest you in the name of the law," said the prefect, "for the murder of the Marquis Cassarole."

The count dropped his glass, seized his pistols, and tried to discharge them both without effect. Then he picked up his dagger, when the blade dropped to the floor. The murderer was stupefied, and in another instant was seized and handcuffed.

"Take him to prison!" was the prefect's order.

Chic then showed the way to the countess's room. Both doors were locked, but Chic readily opened them, and the poor woman was discovered lying upon the floor insensible, with a dislocated shoulder. She was properly cared for, and a guard set over her.

All Paris was in a blaze, a few hours later, when the news of the arrest of the count and countess went abroad. It was believed at once that Montebello was the murderer, and that *Robert le Diable* had nothing whatever to do with it.

It was not difficult, with the many proofs of which Chic had possessed himself, to bring the crime home to Montebello. He was tried before the Court of Assizes and found guilty, and, being brought to the block, died, as he had lived, an unrepentant brute.

When, at the trial, it was whispered that *Robert le Diable* was in court, the room shook with the applause of the spectators. The

crowd outside took up the cry, and it required all the authority of the court to restore order.

When the judge delivered the sentence of death on the murderer of Count Cassarole, James Gale arose and left the court-room with a buoyant step. He was received by the vast crowd outside with loud shouts, though perhaps most of them did not know what they were shouting for.

The wretched countess had suffered enough for the crimes she had committed. The only light in her life for years past had been while Chic served her as page. Montebello had inflicted on her every punishment he could think of, and God was merciful to her, letting her die ere she could pay the penalty of the crime she had helped to commit, while she saved an honored name from ignominy.

The countess made a full confession ere she breathed her last, entirely exonerating *Robert le Diable*, and died an humble penitent, asking mercy for all her sins.

The prefect of police felt very grateful to the brothers for aiding him to bring so great a criminal as Montebello to justice. He reaped all the credit of the affair, and it greatly increased his reputation, although some persons wondered why so many years were allowed to elapse before the real culprit was discovered. But it was, after all, but a nine days' wonder in Paris, where startling events are constantly presenting themselves like the shiftings of a kaleidoscope, making new subjects for the gossips.

There being nothing more to detain our friends in Paris, they prepared to return to the United States. Charles Gale had restrained his impatience with characteristic imperturbability, though he longed to be off in search of Flossy. He felt sure her abduction was the work of Brice, who had hired some one to do the deed while he himself was on board the packet, so that attention would be drawn from him; but Brice was now in the hands of the British authorities, and nothing further was to be feared from him.

Charles felt sure that Brice's agent would eventually tire of holding a helpless girl, and would give her up for a consideration, especially when he learned that Brice was in prison for a felony, and could no longer assist him with his purse.

CHAPTER LX.

EVENTS ON THE SCHOONER.

THE night on which Count Conti embarked on board the schooner and sailed away with *la belle Autrichienne* was far too beautiful a one for the commencement of such a criminal career as was intended by the count when he cast his all on the hazard of the die.

From what the count knew of von Beust's character, he felt sure that if by any chance his wound should not prove mortal he would follow him to the ends of the earth to seek for vengeance. While the baron was helpless, therefore, Conti set fire to the book-case, hoping his crime would be buried for ever among the charred timbers of the château.

We have seen how the would-be murderer was circumvented.

The night of the schooner's escape she sailed down the Mediterranean with a good breeze, a smooth sea, and a bright, full moon. The two criminals imagined that fortune smiled upon their voyage, but had they remained on deck until the moon set, it would have seemed to them as if she was going down in a sea of blood, so lurid was her light, and so ominous of a storm was the whole atmosphere.

Conti and his companion had stayed a while on deck to enjoy the scene, if it were possible to find enjoyment after perpetrating crimes such as they had committed, but they could find no words in which to express their thoughts. Nemesis had already taken her station beside them, and began to teach them to abhor each other. What words they had to say were not of love, but the beginning of reproaches, to culminate, ere many days, in angry retorts.

There was no real love between them. They had been acquainted but for a short time. Count Conti, an adventurer, of handsome appearance and bland manners, had made his advent at Monaco a few days after the arrival there of von Beust and his wife. He at once procured an introduction to the latter, and paid her the most gallant attentions, with what result has been seen.

Count Conti did not think it necessary to cultivate the acquaintance of von Beust, a gentleman who seemed to wish to avoid every one.

Von Beust had noticed Conti's attentions to his wife, but gave

little heed to the matter, supposing it one of madam's numerous affairs, which were so common he had long since ceased to take any account of them.

No one knew who Count Conti was, although he claimed to reside in Naples. He was a man of fascinating manners. He seemed to possess abundant means, and was known in Monaco as the *Cavalier servante of la belle Autrichienne*.

The majority of the foreigners at Monaco avoided Conti, but this did not seem to trouble him. He lavished all his attentions on *la belle Autrichienne*, consoling himself and her for any rebuffs they received.

It was growing late when the two fugitives were informed by the cabin-steward that supper was ready for them. They had been sitting on deck for the last two hours, seldom speaking, and starting in alarm as the shadows of the clouds flitted across the deck; not that they felt any remorse for what they had done, but they did not yet feel secure of escape, and dreaded the pursuit of an avenger. The sight of every distant sail made *la belle Autrichienne* tremble, and, being chilled by the night-air, she was glad to descend to the cabin.

"Come," she said to Conti, "let us go and forget our fears in bumpers of champagne. I thought myself brave, but begin to doubt it. I shall get over my nervousness when I have drunk my fill of my favorite beverage. Ah, me! I fear I have a conscience."

"Keep up your spirits, my dear baroness," said the count; "throw care and conscience to the winds. Let us defy death even. We will pluck the old dotard by the beard and cast him beneath our feet, and taking the boy Love in our arms, we will pour out libations to him, and toast his name for ever."

"Love!" she said, scornfully; "did I not tell you my love was buried in the grave? Do not talk to me of love."

Count Conti followed her, his lips wreathed with a bitter smile. But when he came within the circle of light which illuminated the cabin, and beheld the choice viands and the sparkling wines, his features assumed a blander expression, and his fine eyes testified his pleasure.

A handsome mulatto, dressed in Oriental costume, waited at the table, and, as he placed chairs for the two to be seated, he bowed almost to the deck.

The schooner's cabin was fitted with everything beautiful. It was the same vessel in which James Deville had sailed with his

wife from Gardiner's Bay. They proceeded direct to Trieste, where the schooner had been placed in the hands of an Austrian merchant, who lavished large sums upon a new outfit and had the vessel transferred by a bill of sale to the Austrian flag. It was amid all this magnificence that Conti and his paramour now reveled.

Let us pass over the wild orgies of that night. Even the attendant, who had witnessed many scenes of revelry in that cabin, had never beheld so wild a performance. Champagne flowed as never before, and baskets of it were sent on deck to the crew, who made night hideous with their bacchanalian songs.

At four o'clock in the morning the revelers extinguished the lights and retired to repose—if repose is possible to two beings so steeped in crime.

It was late the next day when the culprits partook of the sumptuous breakfast prepared for them in the cabin, to which they sat down with a gloomy air.

By noon of the following day the schooner sighted Cape de Cruz, on the coast of Spain, and Count Conti came on deck, with *La belle Autrichienne* leaning on his arm. The count had dressed himself in a simple naval uniform, which he found on board, and, with a gold-laced cap, looked every inch a sailor.

The crew stared at Conti, wondering who this man could be that dared assume the dress of one who had controlled them in days gone by, and carried them safely through many dangerous adventures.

La belle Autrichienne spoke in winning tones to the first officer—tones she knew how to assume when it suited her purpose to use them. "Send the crew here," she said, "that I may introduce their new captain to them, and bespeak obedience to his commands."

The first officer assembled the crew on the forecastle, where they seemed to be listening to his words. Then they moved aft in a body and stood near the capstan, with folded arms and scowling faces, waiting for *la belle Autrichienne* to begin.

"Men," she said, pointing to Count Conti, "this is your captain, and you are ordered by Baron von Beust to obey him as you would himself."

The crew were a hard-looking set, made up of English, Germans, and Americans. Though clean and neat in their yachting uniforms, they looked like desperate characters, and the marks of many a wild fray on their countenances did not add to their beauty.

La belle Autrichienne next opened a paper and read what purported to be the Baron von Beust's orders, directing that Count Conti should take command for a time.

When she had finished, a large, ruffianly looking fellow stepped forward. "Your ladyship," he said, "we would like to see the baron's signature to that there paper. We don't doubt ye, but business is business, and we've signed articles to serve under him and obey him or his agent."

"Here is the paper," she answered, haughtily; "read it! Do you dare doubt the baron's wife?"

"No, your ladyship," replied the man, "but we represent the baron until he puts some one over us," and he scrutinized the letter carefully. "It won't do, your ladyship. This paper don't say 'my duly authorized agent.'" He turned and went forward, followed by the whole crew, who stood in groups discussing the matter among themselves.

La belle Autrichienne turned livid with rage, and her steely eyes glittered as they never did before, while the count stood unmoved, with smiling face, as if enjoying the sport—if sport it could be called.

"Will you stand there and see me insulted?" she exclaimed. "Will you let my crew mutiny before my eyes? Von Beust would ere this have brained the whole of them."

"Yes, fair lady," replied Count Conti, "he had the muscle to do it; I have not. But wait a while and let them think it over. They will obey me before twenty minutes are over."

"Let them think it over!" she exclaimed; "well, be it so! But you are not the man I took you for."

Ten minutes passed, and there were no signs of the crew reconsidering their action, when Conti took from his breast-pocket a boatswain's call. "Look, your ladyship," he exclaimed, "and see the magic of this little whistle. It is better than knocking people's brains out. It would have taken your Hercules half an hour to brain all those men, and I can command their obedience in less than two minutes."

He put the call to his mouth and blew three shrill, peculiar whistles. The crew started as if a bomb-shell had exploded in their midst; all jumped to their feet and looked aft. Conti gave them no time to consider, but called out, in a clear, manly voice, "Come aft, all of you; your time is up!"

All moved aft as if in a panic, some of them visibly trembling.

As they went they took off their hats and stood before Conti, bare-headed.

"Do you understand your duty now?" he asked, in a calm voice. "Are you ready to obey the baroness's orders, or am I to shoot half a dozen of you to teach the rest their duty?"

"We obey, your honor," said the leader; "we didn't know—"

"All right then," said Conti. "Get the guns on deck and mount them, and put the small arms in the racks."

All moved forward, giving three cheers. "There, my lady," said the count, smiling blandly, "that is better than braining people."

She looked earnestly at him. "You have done well," she said. "I do not understand the mysteries of you sea-people. No doubt you have been a rover—one of those ruffians' pals, perhaps, or else that whistle speaks a language of freemasonry known only to a class of rovers of which you are a leader. I don't care how you gained the men's obedience—enough for me that they obey. It pleases me that you have been linked with crime. I may love you madly yet. I began to think you too innocent for me, but I shall find you out as we sail; they say there's nothing like sailing with a person to find out his character. Make haste and mount your guns—I want to hear them bark. I am fit for nothing now but to be a corsair's bride, and in you I think I have found a fit helpmate."

Count Conti went forward among the crew, who were working to get the guns up from below. In three hours they were all mounted—a long brass twelve-pounder forward, and four brass eighteen-pounder carronades in the waist. Iron stanchions were shipped in the rail, and a piece of canvas stretched along and fitted so as to hide all the guns from outside view, and making the schooner look four feet higher out of water.

"Well done, boys!" said the count, when the job was finished. "Steward, serve them a gallon of the best rum." At this the men gave three cheers again, and moved forward in apparently the best of humor.

Sea-watch was now set, and every man whose time it was to be on deck was busy all day long. Orders were given to sail for the Atlantic Ocean, avoiding all vessels-of-war, and show no lights at night. The first officer was directed to be at all times ready for a call.

The schooner was prepared for war, and the count, seeing that his presence was not needed on deck, spent most of his time in the

cabin in soft dalliance with *la belle Autrichienne*, who seemed to cling to him now that she knew he had been the companion of criminals, and no doubt more wicked than herself. That he had been guilty of dark crimes she felt certain; for at times there came across his countenance a look of inward pain that could not be repressed. He had apparently little sympathy with the wild crew of the schooner, whom he held in strict subjection by some magic power. What that power was, she could not divine.

Conti never spoke to any one except the first officer, to whom he gave orders from time to time, but even with him he had no familiarity. With her he was always smiling, and over the wine-cup he was as bright and sparkling as the champagne they quaffed together.

This man was to her a mystery. He did not seem disposed to reveal to her the secrets of his life. He laughed at crime as if it were a passport into heaven, and uttered sentiments that would shock the basest heart. All this gave promise that *la belle Autrichienne* would ere long love him with all her heart—such a heart as it was; for the deeper his sins, the nearer she felt to him.

In seven days the schooner passed through the Strait of Gibraltar, carried rapidly on her course by a strong Levant wind.

After passing the strait, Count Conti ordered the first officer to run for the port of Cadiz, and heave-to twelve miles outside the harbor.

The crew all knew what this meant, and went on with their work with smiling faces, or lay around the deck smoking and telling stories of their marauding expeditions, the man on the cross-trees keeping a bright lookout for strange sails. Many came in sight bound to or from Cadiz, but, being small coasters, little notice was taken of them. Those on board the schooner were looking for higher game.

Three days passed in this monotonous waiting, when at last the man at the mast-head sang out, "Sail ho!" and reporting the stranger a large, square-rigged vessel, standing from the westward toward Cadiz, and coming with a fresh breeze.

All was bustle on board the schooner; all sail was put upon her, and she commenced beating out toward the stranger. The crew went to quarters, loaded the guns, and laid their pistols and cutlasses on deck, where they would be handy.

The count walked calmly up and down the deck. The crew

were so well drilled at their business that no orders were needed from him ; but there was a gleam of satisfaction in his eye that could not be mistaken.

La belle Autrichienne walked up and touched his arm. "What does this mean ?" she inquired.

"It means two million dollars," said Conti, "if I am not mistaken in the vessel. A ship richly laden comes once a month from Havana. This is about the time she should arrive ; and look ! there is the Spanish flag floating at her peak !"

"But suppose this proves not to be the vessel ?"

"Then those on board will walk the plank."

She smiled grimly. "Ah, I feel that I shall love you with all my soul. You are as hardened in sin as I am."

The breeze had died away where the ship now was, and the sails began to flap idly against the masts, while a crowd of disappointed passengers could be seen on board, hurrying about the quarter-deck, looking at the distant hills and the port of Cadiz, which they had hoped to reach in a couple of hours.

The schooner also began to lose the breeze when she was two miles only from the Spanish ship, but, as she had all her light sails set, she slipped along slowly through the water and luffed up across the stern of the Spaniard, the wind barely allowing her to fetch about a hundred yards on the stranger's port beam.

As the schooner passed under the ship's stern a motley group of passengers assembled on the quarter-deck, anxious to look at what they supposed to be a vessel-of-war, judging from her guns and general appearance, though she wore no ensign at her peak, or pennant at her mast-head, to indicate to what nation she belonged.

Spain was at that time engaged in war with some of her South American colonies. This vessel might belong to some of them, and be on a voyage of destruction against Spanish commerce.

The old Spanish captain, who stood on the taffrail waiting to be hailed, looked with anxious and doubtful eyes upon the schooner as she approached. When the latter was directly under the ship's stern, a clear, ringing voice came from the schooner's deck.

"What ship is that ?"

"*El Carmen*," replied the captain, in a trembling voice ; "*hace treinta dias desde salimos del puerto de la Habana !*"

"I thought so," said Conti to *la belle Autrichienne*, who was standing at his side ; "my two millions are on board. We will make a good haul of prize-money, and replenish the mine."

Her eyes gleamed with satisfaction as she thought, "This is a being worthy of my love."

"I will send a boat on board the ship," called out the same clear voice, and in an instant a double-bank, twelve-oared boat was lowered from the schooner, the men all armed with cutlasses and pistols, and the count jumped into the stern-sheets.

In two minutes more they were alongside the Spaniard. The man-ropes were held out to Conti, who sprang up the side, followed by ten of his men, leaving two behind as boat-keepers.

As Conti touched the deck, where the Spanish captain stood to receive him, he looked quickly around, and, turning to the captain, said in Spanish, "Clew up your fore-sail, let run all the sheets and halyards of the top-sails and topgallant-sails, haul down the jib, and have all your large boats ready to transport your specie to the schooner."

The captain turned deadly pale, and his knees trembled so that he could scarcely stand. "But who are you?" he asked, "and by what authority do you give orders on board my ship?"

The count smiled blandly. Touching the captain upon the shoulder and pointing to the schooner, he said, "Look there!" Then, taking from his pocket the boatswain's call, he blew a shrill blast, and, as if already prepared, the black flag was run up to the schooner's main peak. "That is my authority. Do you dispute it?"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed the old man, almost paralyzed with fear. "I will do your bidding, but, Santa Maria, treat us with mercy!"

The passengers were all as much frightened as the captain. Many of them ran below and hid themselves, while the few women who were on deck threw themselves on their knees and bewailed their fate in shrieks and sobs, their children clinging to them and rending the air with their infantile cries.

"Cut away the sheets and halyards," said Conti to his men; "let everything go flying." This was done almost in an instant, and the rattling of blocks, the yards crashing down upon the caps, the running-rigging flying, and the splitting of canvas, made confusion worse confounded.

The cries and shrieks increased, for all on board thought these acts were merely the beginning of the destruction of the *Carmen*.

"Man your boats with part of your crew," ordered the count of the captain; "the rest get up the gold from below."

"*Gracias á Dios!*" said the captain, "I have no gold on board;

I brought none this voyage. I sailed before my time. Take all the money myself and passengers have, and such part of the cargo as may suit you, and let us go. I have a wife and four children waiting for me at home, and I can see them by to-morrow if your honor chooses."

"You will never see them again," said the count, smiling blandly. "Here," calling his men, "this old rascal lies. Let him walk the plank. I will have no lying when I board a ship."

The men obeyed the order with alacrity. Hauling a long, wide plank from where it was stowed amidships, and carrying it to the gangway, they thrust one end far out over the side, while they secured the end inside with ropes.

The old man beheld these proceedings with ghastly face and starting eyes. His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth; he could not find speech to say what he wanted.

He threw himself on his knees before the pirate. "In mercy spare me," he cried; "I will tell you where the gold is. I will tell you all; only let me go—when you have it—and see my wife and children."

"You have lied to me," said Conti. "I have no faith in a liar. I do not want your information, for I know as well as you do where the gold is. It is stowed alongside the keel in wooden boxes. You shall walk the plank as an example to your crew."

"*Valgame Dios!*" screamed the wretched man, "I am lost! lost!" and he begged for mercy until the pirate spurned him with his foot.

Then the old man rose to his feet, with indignation on his face. His Spanish blood was stirred at this last act of degradation. "No mercy can be expected of you," he said; "may you in your last hour receive such mercy as you show to me. I am ready; do your worst!"

"Put him on the plank," said the pirate, "and let him walk!"

The men blindfolded the old captain and placed him on the plank. He walked steadily ahead without a quiver of the muscles, and in another moment was struggling in the sea.

La belle Autrichienne watched him from the schooner's deck as he vainly tried to grasp the smooth sides of the ship, but his agonies were short. She saw that his doom was sealed, and, folding his hands and breathing a prayer, he disappeared for ever beneath the waves.

The woman saw it all, and her steely eyes looked on undismayed

at the horrid spectacle. Still a slight shudder shook her frame as the man went down, and she descended to the cabin as if satisfied with what she had seen. "Give me champagne," she cried to the steward; "I would forget this scene if I could. I am not yet steeped enough in crime. Conti is my superior there. I've found my master at last."

There was no further difficulty in obtaining information on board the Spanish ship after the summary execution of the captain, and orders were promptly obeyed. The boats were lowered and manned by the Spanish crew, the hatches opened, and the cargo of sugar and coffee was tumbled overboard until the keel was laid bare, and there on each side of it lay a hundred boxes, containing in all two millions of dollars. The money was hoisted out, rapidly transferred to the boats, taken to the schooner, and stowed in her hold.

Three hours had passed, during which time it had remained perfectly calm. Not a breath of air stirred the ocean, and the ship lay rolling in the undulating sea like a huge walrus. In the mean time a brisk breeze seemed to be blowing in with the land, and several small craft were seen sailing parallel with the shore, with but a small amount of canvas set.

At length the breeze extended more out to sea, and white-caps made their appearance three or four miles off. As the last boat-load of gold reached the schooner a hail came from her. A square-rigged vessel was seen standing out from the port of Cadiz, looking like a ship-of-war.

"All right. Now, men, use your outlasses on the lanyards of the lower rigging. This is a fast ship; I don't want them to be able to make sail for a day or two." Then turning to the few passengers that remained on deck, he said, with a smile, "I wish you all good-morning, and a happy meeting with your friends. I am sorry you have lost your captain, but it was his own fault. I despise liars, and if he had only told the truth he would have been living now. The mate can navigate the vessel into port. *Adios!*" And he stepped into his boat with the jaunty air of one who had been paying a visit of ceremony to a ship-of-war.

"*Gracias vuestra excelencia, viva Vmd. mil años, ay Dios mio que buen fortuna!*" cried the passengers, falling on their knees and crossing themselves at the unexpected mercy shown them. Not a dollar was taken from any passenger, nor was any one maltreated. All the count wanted was the gold lying next the keel;

watches and purses were small game, with which he did not trouble himself.

When he reached the schooner, Conti ordered the boat hoisted, and scrutinized the vessel coming down from the windward. She was carrying topgallant-sails, and bringing a fresh breeze with her, while where the schooner lay there was not wind enough to keep the vessel steady.

The Spanish ship was rolling deeply, and her masts, having no rigging to support them, threatened to go by the board. The sailors were afraid to do anything while the schooner was in sight, for the plank on which their captain had walked overboard was still sticking over the side.

At length the count took the glass from his eye and said, calmly, "Draw the fore and jib sheets, set the gaff top-sails, and get up all the light and flying sails. That vessel means trouble; we must get off with our two millions." At that instant the foremast of the Spanish ship went by the board, as a flaw of wind struck her sails.

The vessel to windward was now only about four miles distant, and could be plainly made out as a brig-of-war with six ports on a side. She was making sail rapidly; royals, topmast, and topgallant steering-sails were set as if by magic, and the vessel carried a great foaming wave before her.

"She is coming on at the rate of ten knots," said the count, calmly. "We are making about six. Let her go off N.W.; perhaps we shall leave her."

"Are you afraid of her?" inquired *la belle Autrichienne*, who had come on deck upon hearing the orders given. Her face was flushed and her eyes gleamed with that steely look she put on when the devil had possession of her.

"Afraid!" he exclaimed, turning scornfully around, while a hateful expression shot from his generally soft eyes; "no, I fear nothing—not even you. Do not disturb me. I am prudent and not a fool."

She quailed before his look and walked aft.

"Heave the log!" said Conti. The order was obeyed, and a speed of nine knots reported.

"That won't do," said Conti; "we must not get within reach of her long six-pounders, for one of those will bring down a gaff top-sail as well as a thirty-two-pound shot."

The breeze freshened. "Keep her off a point," said the pirate

chief, "and set all the light sails." In ten minutes the order was executed.

The log was again hove, and ten and a half knots was the result.

"That will do ; now steer steadily," said Conti.

It was evident that the brig was paying no attention to the crippled ship, but, having taken in the situation, was steering for the schooner, which was apparently trying to cross her bow on a diagonal course. "Ah !" said the count, smiling, "we are going half a knot faster than the brig, and she can't overtake us at that rate."

La belle Autrichienne touched his arm. "Are you afraid of being overtaken ?" she inquired, with devilish malice shining from her eyes, for she smarted under the rebuke he had lately given her. "What would they do if they captured you and recognized you as an old offender ?"

"They would hang me," replied Conti, "and imprison you for the rest of your life. But I can save you from that degradation, for there is a barrel of gunpowder under the cabin-floor, and should our capture appear inevitable, we will go up merrily together."

"Is there any likelihood of her overtaking us ?"

"There certainly is," replied Conti, calmly ; "a stray shot cutting away the halyards of our light sails would bring her up with us in two hours."

Her cheeks blanched as she walked away. But there seemed little prospect of the brig overtaking the schooner, for the latter was head reaching the other, and gradually hauling up to the northward, with the intention of getting the weather-gauge. In two hours she was on a line with the brig, both going close hauled, the schooner making nine knots to the brig's seven, and cutting her out of the wind all the time. At length the brig was five miles astern, her white streak not visible from her deck.

"Go about !" ordered Conti, "and let me know when the brig is under our lee. Have the long gun loaded with full charge and single shot."

Conti then went below and ordered a lunch to be served with a bottle of the best champagne. "*Ma belle*," said he to his companion, "the brig is the Curlew, as I know from certain marks. Your brother is on board of her. When we get the range I want, you shall point the long tom at her and fire ; you may reach your brother's heart."

She jumped from her seat as if touched by an electric spark,

and looked at Conti as if she could annihilate him. "You are indeed a worthy partner in crime," she exclaimed, with pale lips. "With all my wickedness I could not do that. But who are you that knows of my brother's being on board the Curlew, for I am sure I never mentioned it? Are you the devil himself in human shape? I ought to love you, if only for your crimes."

Conti laughed as he replied, "*Ma belle*, I saw in a newspaper over a year ago your brother's name mentioned as one of the officers of the Curlew. I saw the vessel in Naples, and so I recognized her. I make it my business to note anything remarkable about ships-of-war. How I know you to be the former Louise Morton I shall not tell. You will find out some of these days." And he tossed off a bumper of champagne.

The officer of the deck at that moment reported that the brig would soon be under the lee, and the count accordingly went on deck.

The vessels were on opposite tacks and passing each other at the rate of twenty miles an hour, averaging ten knots each. "We are passing closer than I expected," said the count; "it will give him a chance to fire, but we must risk something. I must know the range of his long six-pounder."

Just then the brig fired a shot from her bow-gun and went in stays. The shot fell short some three hundred yards, falling dead in the water without ricochetting.

"That," said the count, "was fired at highest elevation. We have him at our own distance. Clear away the long tom and let him have it; seven degrees elevation!"

The brig was now about on the same tack with the schooner, and all her sails were carefully trimmed; she opened again on the schooner, and again the shot fell short.

The first shot from the schooner went over the brig; then the elevation was reduced until the proper range was reached, and the brig's foretopgallant-mast, with sail and yard, went over the side. This checked her headway, and the schooner had no difficulty in choosing her distance.

After a quarter of an hour's firing the brig's jib-boom was seen to go overboard, with all its sail and gear dragging under the bow, whereupon the pirates gave three cheers, and the count calmly lighted a cigar. *La belle Autrichienne* sat moodily on the other side of the quarter-deck, looking in the opposite direction from the brig.

All this time the brig had kept up a useless fire, but had not hoisted her flag, her commander seemingly deeming it unworthy of him to show his ensign to a pirate, but, now that the brig was beaten, her commander determined to go down with his colors flying. Just as the American flag was run up a shot from the schooner struck the foretop-mast just above the cap, and mast and sail came tumbling upon deck with all the rigging.

This must have extinguished all hope in the hearts of the officers and crew of the Curlew, and they saw nothing but an ignominious ending of what they had at first considered a certain triumph. They stopped firing, and all hands went to work to clear the wreck.

Just as the schooner's long tom was about to be fired again, *la belle Autrichienne* stepped over to where the count stood. He looked up calmly, as if lost in a delightful reverie.

"Enough of this!" she said, imperiously. "Spare my brother, and if you do not value human life, at least respect the flag under which I was born!"

Conti held up his hand. "Stop firing," he ordered; "the lady wills it. Ah, *ma belle*, you thought I was afraid, and you still cherish sentiments of humanity! How beautiful you are in your new rôle! We will rob no more, but turn our cutlasses into pruning-hooks, and, instead of roaming the seas in search of Spanish ingots, we will pass the time in sweet dalliance over champagne and absinthe.

"Secure the gun," he said to the officer, "and go about on the other tack; let me know when she has run twenty-five miles.

"And now, *ma belle*, since no bones are broken, let us go down and rejoice over our victory."

But *la belle Autrichienne* was in bad humor. This man had humbled her by his supreme coolness and indifference, and, though he was courteous, she felt that he treated her like a spoiled child. He made her feel as if she had a master. This was gall and wormwood to her, and she could not help showing it.

"You call that a victory," she exclaimed, "where you had all the advantage with your long gun? You did not dare go within reach of her heavy guns; she would have captured you, and you would have been hanged like a dog."

"And you, *ma belle*," replied Conti, "would have been sent to prison for life. Don't forget that part of the programme." His brow became corrugated, but he still smiled blandly. "Let us sit

down to our lunch," he said; "the smell of powder makes me hungry."

"*Peste!*" she murmured, but loud enough for him to hear, and she sat down, looking gloomy and discontented. Conti paid her a hundred compliments, and plied her with wine, but not a word would she vouchsafe to him.

In a little over two hours the officer of the deck came down. "We have run twenty-five miles, sir," he said, "and are closing with the land."

"Keep her off then," replied Conti, "and let her go due west for America. These shores are getting too hot for us, and in a few days half the navies of Europe will be in search of us. In twenty days," said he, turning to his companion, "you will probably see your native land."

"I hate it!" she cried, "and everybody in it. I did not come with you for this; you have deceived me."

He shrugged his shoulders and lighted a cigar. "We are pirates, *ma belle*," he answered, "and have stolen two millions. All Europe will soon be on the lookout for us. *Voilà tout!*" and he went on deck.

She looked after him with her steely eyes as if she would like to kill him, but said nothing, for she feared him with his cool, bland smile.

The schooner sped on her way, steering west, and we will leave her now and return to the brig.

She was the Curlew, as the count had asserted. Her crew were much relieved when they saw the schooner haul off and steer to the northward. All hands worked manfully all that day until late in the evening to get up a new set of topmasts and spars. Meanwhile the brig stood for the crippled ship, which she found pretty much in the same position.

The brig owed her escape from an ignominious capture solely to the first humane sentiment that had ever animated *la belle Autrichienne's* heart. She thought her brother was on board the Curlew, for she knew nothing of the events that had occurred since she left America, and of Harry Morton's resignation from the navy. Providence may have raised that sentiment in her heart to save the American flag from degradation, but no sentiment could remain long in her breast; like a costly pearl in a string of glass beads, it would be out of place.

In the course of two days the brig succeeded in getting the

Spanish ship into Cadiz, where the acts of the pirate were a nine days' wonder. Three or four ships-of-war immediately put to sea in chase of the rover, but by this time the schooner was far away on her course across the Atlantic, and nothing was seen or heard of her.

As for the count and his companion, they kept up their orgies late at night, drinking, playing cards, and quarreling.

One night Conti sent down to the hold for two boxes of gold, each containing ten thousand dollars. The tops were knocked off, and there stood revealed bright, beautiful doubloons. *La belle Autrichienne's* eyes glistened. "What are those for?" she inquired.

"One box is for you and the other for me," was the reply. "We will gamble to our hearts' content; if you can win, it shall all be yours."

"And if I lose?"

"Then you will be a beggar, and will owe everything you get to me."

She set her teeth close together. "Let us begin."

He smiled, and they sat down to play. At first she was successful, but at length fortune turned against her, and by midnight her box of gold was empty.

"There," said Conti, "*ma belle*, you are the veriest beggar in the world; you will have to ask me for money to buy a pocket-handkerchief even."

She turned white with rage, and snatching up a handful of gold, dashed it in his face. One of the coins struck him over the eye with its sharp edge, and the blood trickled down his face.

Conti wiped the blood away, then rose and locked the cabin-door. "This farce," he said, "has lasted long enough. I will relate to you the history of my life; it will put you in better humor, as you love the relation of good deeds."

"The story of your life must be too vile for even me to listen to," she answered; "I will not hear it."

"*Adieu, ma belle*," said Conti, "you will have to hear an account of the life of a man to whom you are bound by such strong ties, and who will rule your destiny as long as he needs you. When you have heard my story it may have some effect on your determination whether to cling to my fortunes or not."

She looked at him sneeringly. "I see your drift; you tire of

me already ; you wish an excuse to get rid of me. Well, land me where you will, I will not say you nay."

"You have done little of late," said the count, "to make life tolerable to me. Your temper is ever getting the better of you. What greater insult could you offer me than to dash gold into my face?"

"I did it," she replied, "because you robbed me of the gold that was mine. You cheated ; you told me I was a pauper dependent on your bounty, and it enraged me to think you had brought me into a position where I must be the slave of a man who has led as vile a life as you have. Give me one million of your spoil, and prove your boasted love ; then I will believe in you."

He laughed mockingly. "You harp so much upon my life of crime that it is time you should know who your associate is. Sit down beside me, and I will tell you all."

"I will not hear it," she cried, moving away.

"But you must," replied Conti, taking her by the arm and forcing her to sit beside him upon the sofa.

"Brute !" she exclaimed, "you have crushed my arm ; what more will you do to degrade me ?" She struggled violently to get free, but, notwithstanding all her efforts, he kept her in her seat.

"Now listen," he said, "and you shall hear a marvelous tale. Judging by your standard of virtue, you will think better of me when you know me as I am."

Then Conti commenced his narrative, told of his early youth, how he had broken a fond mother's heart by his depravity, had impoverished an indulgent father by his extravagances, and finally obliged him to part with every cent he had in the world to redeem a note which his son had forged ; how he had escaped from justice and joined a gang of pirates that committed unheard-of atrocities.

"Mere juvenile delinquencies," said she, sneeringly. "Thousands of boys have done the same thing. Your insipid tale does not interest me. You will have to make it more racy if you wish to gain my attention."

"You will be attentive enough in time," he said, and proceeded to narrate crimes which would have made a marble statue shudder, but she sat unmoved. At last he reached a point where she herself was concerned. He told her of a young girl whom he knew whose whole nature was vicious, who, when placed at a boarding-school, became engaged and married her father's clerk secretly, knowing that her father would trample them both into the earth if he found

out their secret ; that after marrying she held out lures to other men, and finally engaged herself to an officer, and, to conceal her marriage, connived at the murder of her husband ; and when her lover, who had found out her previous marriage, spurned her, she swore away his life when all the world believed him innocent. "Does my tale interest you now ?"

She sat with horror depicted on her countenance, her eyes starting from their sockets.

"Who are you ?" she muttered, hoarsely. "How came you to know all this ?"

He whispered in her ear some words that made her spring from her seat.

"You !" she cried, "you the author of so foul a deed !" and swift as lightning she snatched a pistol from the table and fired it at his head. The ball grazed his cheek, and Conti fell upon the floor ; she threw the pistol at him and flew to the cabin-door, but it was locked.

The count was stunned but for a moment, and then he jumped to his feet, and while her hand was on the door-knob his iron fingers seized her by the neck and he dashed her to the floor with such violence that she lay insensible. Then lifting her in his arms, he strode out on deck and threw her heavily down again.

The vessel was gliding along under a bright, full moon, and over a sea as smooth as a summer lake. All nature seemed in harmony with peaceful deeds, and faith, hope, and charity seemed dancing over the phosphorescent sea.

Conti thought he had murdered her, for there was not a single throb in her pulse, nor on her lips a motion of struggling breath. She lay as lifeless as if she had been dead an hour.

"I have killed her, but she deserved it," he said, calmly, to the winds and waves, the only witnesses of the scene, the watch being forward half asleep and the officer of the deck lounging over the taffrail. Her dress was saturated with blood, which had flowed from his cheek, and he thought she had burst a blood-vessel.

He blew his call, and four men hurried aft. "Take this woman forward. If she lives, do with her as you please ; if she dies, throw her overboard, but don't let me see her again." He turned and walked below to dress his wound and curse the hand that had marred his beauty.

The crew, more humane than their leader, lifted the woman carefully, supposing she was dead, and carried her forward. After

a while she showed signs of life, and was eventually restored to consciousness by the efforts of the rough men who had taken her in charge.

They went to work at once, and with planks built up a rough state-room, with door and apertures for light and air, and there she stayed and lived.

Her bruised limbs confined her to the coarse, hard bed she had made for herself. But she never murmured, and took mechanically the hard fare brought her by the sailors.

The brute in the cabin never troubled himself about her. She had marred his manly beauty, and he could forgive everything but that.

The schooner was rapidly approaching the shores of America. The airs blew pleasantly, the seas kept smooth, and the phosphorescent water sparkled at night as if lighting up the way for some vessel bound on a mission of peace and mercy.

In fifteen days after the events we have described, a large ship was passing Montauk light-house, steering along the coast of Long Island, bound for New York.

The evening was still and a light wind was blowing fair, and the ship had all her starboard steering-sails set, and was slipping through the water at the rate of about three knots an hour. It wanted but half an hour of midnight, and most of the passengers had sought their cabins, but a few loiterers remained on deck, watching Montauk light slowly receding in the distance. At last even these went below, leaving the officer of the watch and the creaking blocks alone together. The moon had just gone down; a slight mist hung over the horizon, rendering things in the distance somewhat obscure.

The last passenger had just disappeared below when the lookout forward cried out, "A sail on the lee beam, sir!" and immediately the officer of the watch noticed a vessel standing toward them on a wind, as if wishing to pass under the ship's stern. A lantern was at once hung over the quarter, to indicate which way the ship was steering.

The stranger was a large schooner, which, as soon as she got within sixty yards of the ship, eased off her sheets, put her helm up, and steered parallel with the latter, gradually closing until she came within speaking distance. Then came from the schooner a loud, clear voice, "Heave-to! I want to communicate with you."

The captain of the ship, who by this time was on deck, called

out, "What do you want?" and the answer was, "I have a passenger whom I want you to take to New York."

"Can't do it," said the captain; "would lose time. You will meet plenty of coasters in the morning bound in to New York, and perhaps a pilot-boat."

"You must do it," was the reply, "or I will make you!"

"Make me, indeed!" exclaimed the captain; "you will do well at making. Good-night!"

Whereupon a voice was heard, saying, "Clear away the long gun and put a shot through that fellow's cabin!" Lights were flitting about the schooner's deck, and groups of men could now be distinguished.

The captain was startled. "Hold on!" he cried; "don't fire; I will heave-to at once.—That must be a revenue-cutter looking out for smugglers; but I am safe from search," he muttered. "Take in the lower steering-sails, haul up the foresail, let the upper steering-sails settle down upon the yards; keep the booms out. Bring her to the wind, sir, with the head-yards square, ease off head-sheets, brace up the after-yards, haul out the spanker!"

These orders were soon executed. The schooner luffed up with the ship, keeping her parallel distance with her foresheet eased off and her jib-sheet to windward. In ten minutes both vessels lay still upon the water.

A quarter-boat was now lowered from the schooner, and six stalwart fellows jumped in; a trunk was then passed into the boat, and a moment later a woman was handed in. A few strokes of the oars brought the boat to the side of the ship.

"Send down two hands to help the lady up the side," called out a rough voice from the boat. Two of the ship's company went down with a sling-chair, and the passenger was hoisted on board, the men keeping the chair clear of the side.

"Good-night!" said the rough voice; "thank your stars that the captain is in a humane mood to-night, though he did want to sink you!"

The boat shoved off, and in a dozen strokes was again alongside the schooner and was hoisted up. Then the same clear voice was heard to say, "Hard up! haul aft the jib-sheet, ease off the main boom, and let her go due south." In ten minutes more the schooner was lost sight of in the gloom.

The captain looked dazed. It seemed to him like a dream, and he thanked his stars the schooner had given him so little trouble.

He ordered the first officer to make sail and steer his course, and then turned to the woman, who was still sitting in the chair.

Lights were brought and held up, and the captain saw before him the most beautiful woman he had ever beheld. She was pale as marble, with raven black hair, and her eyes shone with the brilliancy of stars. Her clothing was rich, but was soiled and stained with blood. "Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, "there has been foul play here!"

"Yes," replied the woman, coldly, "foul enough; but help me to rise, and lead me to a quiet cabin where I can have rest."

She was assisted to a comfortable state-room, and a glass of wine given her.

"Can I do anything more to make you comfortable?" asked the kind-hearted commander.

"No, I only wish to be alone."

The ship sped on her way, and in two more days was off Sandy Hook, and, with a pilot on board, proceeded up to New York and anchored in the East River.

The passengers had left the ship, and the vessel was being hauled in at slack water to the wharf, when the captain suddenly recollected the woman so strangely brought on board two nights before. He had been so busy looking out for his vessel that he had almost forgotten her existence.

When he knocked at her state-room door the same cold voice called out, "Come in!"

She sat as if prepared to leave the ship. "I wanted to see you," she said, "before I left, to thank you for your kindness and pay you for my passage."

"There is nothing to pay for," replied the captain, "you have been so short a time on board; besides, you seem entitled to every one's sympathy."

"But I *must* pay," she exclaimed, imperiously; "*he* gave me fifty doubloons to pay my way. They are in this purse. Take all the money. I would not touch it for the world; there is blood upon it. All I ask is for you to call a carriage, put me and my trunk in it, and let me go and find a home. I must have rest."

"Who is *he*, madam, to whom you allude?"

"A brute, a murderer, a pirate, a villain of the deepest dye, who has wrecked my life; but question me no more. See me on deck. I will not take that gold. I have enough of my own to get me where I wish to go." She arose, painfully and with difficulty,

and, assisted by the captain, managed to reach the deck, where she sat until a carriage could be called.

When she was handed in she told the driver to drive up Broadway. She gave no name, and the captain knew no more of her when she departed than when she came on board.

CHAPTER LXI.

AN ASYLUM.

ABOUT the middle of December a heavy gale was raging all along the coast. The shipping at the wharves of New York had suffered a great deal, the ground was covered with snow and sleet, and walking was extremely difficult.

The poor in the slums of the city shivered over their scanty coals. It was a pitiless night, long to be remembered for the calamities it ushered in.

There was a convent on the Bloomingdale Road, built by a community of nuns, and presided over by a good and charitable Lady Superior, whom all looked up to with veneration.

The convent-walls were covered with ivy and Virginia creeper, so that on one end of it nothing could be seen but the narrow windows, which let in a somber light to the dormitories of the Sisters.

On the cold and bitter night of which we are writing the wind howled round the Convent of the Sacred Cross as if it would tear the solid structure from its foundations. The vines were stripped from the walls where they had clung for years, and thrown long distances into the adjoining fields.

"Holy mother, protect those who are out on such a night as this!" exclaimed the Lady Superior, and she directed the porter to light the large lamps inside the front windows and at the ends of the building, so that those in want of assistance might be guided to a place of shelter. She also directed the great bell-rope to be left hanging outside, so that persons belated might ring if they reached the convent.

None of the Sisters sought their repose as early as usual. They generally retired at nine to their dormitories. They had all remained up, momentarily expecting a knock at the great door from some poor wretch seeking shelter. They were also frightened at the

fierceness of the storm, the like of which they had never witnessed before, and were huddled together in the reception-room.

There were among the inmates of the convent about twenty young girls of various ages who were receiving their education from the Sisters. These had also joined the Sisters in the reception-room, with such clothing on as they could hastily seize, when the storm was at its height, and they no longer dared remain in their rooms.

It was to this convent, if the reader will recollect, that Myra fled to escape the importunities of *Robert le Diable*, and where she determined to dedicate her life to prayer that heaven might forgive his sins. What was her present position in the convent it is not necessary to state; suffice it that she was one of the frightened group assembled in the reception-room.

There came a blast of wind that seemed to be wrenching the slate from the roof.

"Merciful Heaven!" prayed the Lady Superior, "guard and protect us! What a fearful night this is! Even our poor dogs, that are wont to keep such vigilant watch on stormy nights and warn us by their barkings that they are at their posts, have been driven to the stable for shelter. They no doubt kept watch until they could stand it no longer; but it is a misfortune that they have been driven in by the cold, for they might, perhaps, save human life."

The dogs were two large animals kept for protection of the convent, and were a cross between the Newfoundland and the St. Bernard. Just as the Lady Superior had finished her remarks the baying of the dogs was heard above the howling of the storm, and immediately after they were heard scratching wildly at the door-panels, as if trying to obtain admittance.

"Go, Leonard," said the Lady Superior to the porter, "and let the poor brutes in; no doubt they are perishing with the cold."

Old Leonard slowly approached the door and withdrew the ponderous bolts, the dogs keeping up a continuous barking and scratching. The door flew open, driven by a gust of wind that almost threw the old man on his back, and one of the dogs rushed in, ran up to the group of watchers, whined piteously, and then ran out again, the dog outside meanwhile keeping up a furious barking.

"This is something very unusual, my children," said the Lady Superior. "God grant that we may be in time to save a human life! Take the great lantern, Leonard, and see what the dogs mean."

Ring the alarm-bell to call the gardeners, who must be awake on such a night as this."

Leonard did as he was directed, and soon the sound of the bell rang out upon the freezing air. The two men who were summoned immediately answered the call. They rushed from the warm hearth around which they had been sitting to the convent-door, battling with the wind, which seemed determined to keep them back. The lantern lighted up the grounds for some distance, and the dogs could be seen standing over a prostrate form at the gate, moaning, and at times baying, in the most melancholy manner.

The men made all the haste they could, and found the dogs licking the face and hands of a woman who was lying on the ground, her garments stiff with frozen sleet.

They promptly took the woman bodily from the ground and carried her into the convent, followed by the dogs.

The rush of wind through the convent-door had extinguished all the lights in the hall except the lantern old Leonard carried, and the fire which burned brightly on the hearth.

The two gardeners laid the woman down before the fire to get the benefit of its warmth, but the vital spark seemed to be extinct.

The Lady Superior ordered a mattress and plenty of blankets to be brought, and all the restoratives the convent possessed.

"Go below and warm yourselves," said the Lady Superior to the men; "take the dogs with you, and give them some food to reward their zeal. Leonard, peal the bell every five minutes for the convent doctor. As the wind is in the right direction, he may hear it even on such a night as this. Until he comes we will do our best for this poor creature."

Sister Agatha, one of the elder nuns, now took charge of the wretched wanderer. The nun placed a cordial to the invalid's lips, but her teeth were tightly closed. She felt the pulse, but it did not beat. Then she placed her hand on the woman's heart.

Presently a ray of joy, such as might illuminate the countenance of an angel, spread over the Sister's face. "She lives!" she exclaimed. "I have counted a hundred beats of her heart. Hot water to her feet at once; strip off these frozen clothes, and roll her up in hot blankets!"

Willing hearts and hands were there, and the orders were executed almost as soon as given. Sister Agatha kept her hand on the invalid's heart while the restoratives were being applied, and in ten minutes she declared that their patient was improving.

In the course of an hour she sighed heavily, and soon after the doctor arrived.

"A bitter night, indeed!" exclaimed the doctor, his teeth chattering with cold. "God help the poor, indeed! God help any one who is obliged to be out on such a night! What have we here?" he said, looking at the woman by the fire.

"A wanderer through the storm," replied the Lady Superior, "whom God in his mercy has led to this asylum. She seems to need our best attention. Will she live?"

The doctor put his hand upon her wrist. "A fluttering pulse," he said, "but not very weak." He put his hand on her heart. "She will live, I think. Hers is a case of suspended animation and prostration from cold. You have done the best that could be done for her, and your aid came in good time, for in ten minutes more she would have been dead. Keep her in a warm bed in a warm room, give her hot drinks, a simple stimulant, and let her sleep."

"But, bless my soul!" continued the doctor, looking around him, "what are all these young people doing up at this time of the night? I shall have twenty cases on my hands to-morrow. Madam, send them all to bed. The storm is abating, and they need have no more fear, if that is the cause of their being up so late."

"Yes, my children," said the Lady Superior, "go to bed and sleep off your fears. We will take care of this sick person, and do not forget to thank God for all his mercies. Sister Agatha and Sister Erma may stay and assist in the care of this poor creature."

Upon this all the other inmates of the convent retired to their rooms.

The lamps in the hall had all been relighted, and the doctor went to the cot to examine his patient more closely. "Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, "what a beautiful face! and so youthful, too, though marked by traces of care and privation."

The woman's coal-black hair had all fallen loose, and her pale face was framed by her rich and abundant tresses, which spread all over the pillow.

"A wonderfully beautiful face," said the Lady Superior, "and so young looking! She can not be more than twenty-three or four years of age, although grief and privation have added lines of care to her face. And see! there are actually threads of silver already in her beautiful hair. Ah me! let us thank heaven for providing

us with this peaceful sanctuary, where we can soothe the ills of others without undergoing their sufferings."

The patient was now conveyed carefully to the room assigned her and put to bed, where she was attended during the night by Sisters Agatha and Erma.

The clothing the patient had worn when brought into the convent lay near the hall fire-place. The ice and sleet upon them melted by the heat, forming a puddle upon the floor.

"Those clothes," said the doctor, "may throw some light upon this matter. Look, what a mixture of poverty and wealth! Fine linen chemise trimmed with rich lace, and coarse underclothing; shoes old and worn, but expensively made. Her gown is coarse and cheap, while she wears a thread-lace handkerchief around her throat. There is a mystery here. Some great misfortune has overtaken her. But let her rest. She needs only tender treatment to bring her about. I will see her in the morning. Good-night."

The woman slept quietly all night, like one much exhausted. The nurses could scarcely hear her breathe, and only once or twice she uttered a faint sigh.

The storm rapidly abated, and at seven o'clock the sun was pouring a flood of light into the room. Sisters Agatha and Erma went to the patient's bedside. She was awake, and with her great black eyes regarded the Sisters attentively.

"Where am I?" asked the invalid; "is this heaven, and are you angels?"

"No, child," said Sister Agatha, "we are simply humble servants of the Lord, and the house you are in is an asylum for those whose hopes are wrecked in this world. It is a resting-place for worn and weary pilgrims, who, being surfeited with the vanities of life, seek a place where they may rest on their journey to heaven, and glorify God by doing good works.

"It is here where charity dwells, not only for the poor and needy, but for those who have sinned and would make atonement. This is the Convent of the Sacred Cross, where, remembering how our Lord and Saviour forgave not only those who came to him repentant, but even those who put him to death, we strive to imitate him. We try to be governed by the Saviour's teachings, though we are but feeble imitators. But do not talk much; it will do you harm."

"No," was the reply, "I am quite strong; but why did you not let me die? I am not fit for so holy a place as this."

"Who but God knows who is fit?" said the Sister. "A tear of repentance is sweeter in his eyes than the most grateful incense. The angels in heaven rejoice far more over one repentant sinner than they do over the souls of the pure and undefiled that have gained admittance to those realms of bliss. What are the brightest gifts compared to tears of repentance from the erring? 'Hymns of joy proclaim through heaven the triumph of a soul forgiven.' Rest, child, rest! You are too young to have sinned much—yours are sins of omission."

A shudder ran through the invalid's frame, and her lips quivered with emotion. She closed her eyes as if she would sleep; then, opening them with an appealing look, she asked, "Can I stay in this peaceful abode? This is the only rest I have had since I passed the years of childhood. This seems a place where the weary can rest; here I may find hope of forgiveness. I have none now."

"Sleep, child," said Sister Agatha; "your mind is wandering. Sister Erma, give her something to soothe her."

"Tell me," repeated the invalid, "can I stay here and expiate my sins? Oh, do not turn me out to meet the scorn of the world! Better to have let me die on that cold and stormy night when I sought your door for shelter; better that I should never rise from this bed than to be thrust out into the cruel world to battle with its temptations, which I have not the power to withstand. I should fall into the depths of sin, and you would be answerable to God for a soul—if a sinner such as I can have a soul."

"Hush, child!" said the Sister; "those are blasphemous words, and I must not listen to them. Only lay the gift of repentance, the most dear to heaven, at the feet of our Saviour, and you will be forgiven your sins. But you must not talk any more. The Lady Superior will visit you in an hour, and you must rest to be able to receive her. Pour your tale of sorrow into her ears; she will listen to it, and will give balm to your wounded spirit. I am nothing but a weak woman like yourself, and unfit to show you the way to heaven."

Sister Agatha smoothed the bedclothes about the patient, and sat down by her side to count her beads. The patient tried to sleep, but in vain. She stole furtive glances at the nun, whose thoughts seemed to be fixed on heaven, and whose lips moved as if communing with her God.

In two hours the Lady Superior softly entered the apartment. "How fares the patient?" she whispered to Sister Agatha. "Don't

wake her ! Go, now ; you and Sister Erma need repose. I will watch awhile until she wakens."

Sister Agatha beckoned to her companion, and they left the room and closed the door behind them. So gentle were their movements that they did not disturb the light slumber into which the invalid had fallen.

She had thrown the bedclothes partly off her chest and throat. One arm rested outside the cover. It was a beautiful arm, and the hand was one a sculptor would have delighted to carve in marble. On the wedding-finger glittered a large diamond, which was kept on the thin finger by a ring of plain gold.

The Lady Superior looked at the sleeping woman with intense curiosity. "How beautiful she is !" she thought ; "yet I fear she will give us trouble. We have never before had such a waif thrown on our hands." She sighed as she thought of the troubles this poor creature had doubtless encountered. Just then the sleeper awoke, and her great black eyes dilated as they opened on this new visitor.

"Have the angels gone ?" she asked. "Have I been dreaming ? Ah ! now I remember ; you are the Lady Superior they told me of. Have you come to bid me depart from this holy place, as unworthy to remain in it ?"

"No, my daughter," said the Lady Superior, in a kind voice, "I come to watch over you in the absence of the two Sisters, who are seeking a little repose. But do not excite yourself ; quiet is absolutely necessary for your recovery. The doctor says with care you will recover. Do not talk now ; wait a day or two until you are better."

"A day will seem to me an age until I know what will become of me," she replied. "Why did you not leave me to die if I am to be sent away from here, the only place where I have known peace for years ?"

"Who said we would send you away ?" replied the Lady Superior. "You can certainly remain here until you are well and able to leave."

"Ah !" exclaimed the invalid, "there are some wounds that never heal, and mine is of that nature. I have fought the world and have been conquered. I want peace of mind and rest of body. Can you not give them to me ? Here is a diamond which cost ten thousand dollars ; it is all I have left out of the thousands I once possessed. It will remunerate your convent well for giving me a

home for a year, and my life will not last longer than that, if so long. I am homeless and friendless, but should be happy here. Will you give me an asylum?"

"How came you to retain this ring amid all your seeming poverty?" asked the Lady Superior. "What does that plain gold ring signify? Are you married?"

"There was a sentiment connected with the diamond ring which saved it from the pawnbroker's—a sentiment that came too late, for, had it taken possession of me earlier, it would have saved me many trials. I was married to one of the noblest of men, but he is dead, and I found out his virtues too late."

"Ours, my daughter," said the Lady Superior, "is a community of virtuous women, who spend their days in good works and in the worship of God. It is a hard life for one whose heart and soul are not in it, and you look as if in your life you had worshiped worldly idols. We are careful whom we admit here as a Sister, and require testimonials of the highest kind. We will nurse and care for you until you are perfectly well, and will then restore you to your friends, who no doubt will gladly receive one so gifted as you seem to be. As to taking your valuable jewel, that could not be. We should take you on your merits, and in consideration of your humbled and contrite spirit, if at all."

"Then you will not take me, and I must go from here back into the dreary path I have been traveling for years."

As she spoke, great scalding tears rolled down her cheeks, and she tried to stifle a sob which seemed almost to choke her. "One of the Sisters," she resumed, "told me that one tear of repentance from a sinner was more precious in the sight of heaven than the most costly offerings. Ah! I could shed many, many tears. Revoke your sentence, dear lady; do not drive me to destruction. It would have been better to have let me die where I fell before your door than bring me to life and thrust me forth from the only place that looked to me like heaven, to meet the scorn of a world with which I never wish to associate more. Your Saviour, whose image hangs on yonder wall, would not accord me such treatment as that. He took the Magdalen by the hand and raised her up, and said, 'Let him who is without sin throw the first stone!'"

The Lady Superior was weeping while the invalid was talking. "Daughter," she said, "you who speak thus can not have sinned deeply; you are too young and beautiful to have had much intercourse with sin. You may have erred—to err is human—but you

are young enough to redeem the past, whatever it may be. You shall stay with us until you are quite restored, and then, if you like our life and it is not too hard for you, you can remain. But I must know something of what your life has been, and I hope you will be able to satisfy any scruples that I have."

Tears flowed from the invalid's eyes and mingled with those of the Lady Superior. She took the latter's hand in her trembling fingers and kissed it with her feverish lips. "Thank you," she said, "for your kind words. I feel as if my mental wounds would heal, and that I shall some day have a glimpse of heaven."

"Thank God, not me, for I am but the humblest of his servants, and act only through his teachings. He is full of mercy and goodness. Why should I be less forgiving than he is, if there is anything to forgive?"

Then they talked together awhile longer, until Sister Agatha came to look after her charge. The Lady Superior's eyes were still humid, and traces of tears were visible on the invalid's cheek, while her dark eyes had a subdued expression.

"Now take some rest, my daughter, and get well," said the Lady Superior, kissing her affectionately. "Sister Agatha, see that our charge has proper nourishment. I will come in again by and by," and she glided from the room.

In two weeks the invalid was completely restored to health, and, when dressed in the black vestment of the Sisters, all wondered at her marvelous beauty. She was allotted a small cell with narrow bedstead, a single mattress, and coarse, clean sheets. A plain pine table and a wooden chair made up the furniture of the narrow apartment. From that day forth the stranger was known in the convent as Sister Imogene.

Time passed on, and the new Sister became known as the most devout of all the inmates of the convent. She was untiring in her devotion to her religious duties, and never missed a mass in the chapel, or a morning or evening prayer.

When Sister Imogene was wanted she was generally to be found in the chapel kneeling before the altar, pouring forth fervent supplications to the throne of grace. She was considered the most faithful of the faithful, and the Lady Superior thanked Heaven that she had extended a helping hand to one so deserving.

Sister Imogene never smiled. She walked with bowed head and eyes fixed upon the ground, performing the most menial services.

Next her soft, velvety skin she wore a coarse hair-shirt to re-

mind her at all times of her sins. She was kind and gentle to all the Sisters, and particularly to the young lady boarders, to whom she gave lessons in music.

Her touch on the piano was perfect, and when her rich, melodious voice was raised in the choir of the chapel, all listeners were held as if by a spell. She always wore a veil over her face except when in presence of the Lady Superior, or of two of the elder Sisters.

Such is the picture of one who considered herself a most wicked sinner, but who in the eyes of the Lady Superior and the nuns was simply a youthful saint, too good for this world, and certain of a place in heaven when her soul should leave her body.

In less than a year after the occurrence of the events we have just narrated the Lady Superior, who was well advanced in life, fell ill and died. Great grief was expressed by all in the convent over the decease of this good mother, who had treated them so kindly and was full of charity to all. By unanimous consent application was made to the church authorities to appoint Sister Imogene to the vacant place. Some objections were made to this on account of her youth, but her other good qualities outweighed them, and Sister Imogene, contrary to her own wishes, received the appointment.

She immediately sold her diamond ring and gave the proceeds—ten thousand dollars—to the convent.

Sister Imogene commenced her administration with great energy, and was truly a representative of mercy in all her acts, causing herself to be beloved far and near.

CHAPTER LXII.

CONFESSIONS.

THE brothers and their sister had arranged to start for Havre two days after the close of the Count of Montebello's trial, thence to take the first packet for the United States.

"James," said Charles Gale to his brother, "it is clear that you will not be able to appear in New York for the present, at least, without a disguise, for, though you now have a light complexion and are otherwise changed from the James Deville formerly

known there, your appearance might attract suspicion. The likeness to your former self would hardly pass unnoticed. The same may be said of me, as we are so much alike, but I am well known to some people in New York as Vere Saye, and I am the same man still, with the addition of whiskers only. You must put on your brown suit, your tawny beard, and the other disguises you used to wear.

"As you employed Brice in all your speculating in Wall Street, you will be less likely to be noticed. Besides, I will manage, a few days after our arrival, to have inserted in the newspapers the certificate of the death, at Monaco, of Baron von Beust, *alias* James Deville, which will relieve you from any future uneasiness. There is not a living being, except myself, who could testify against you. The other witnesses are disposed of, and will never return to this country. I am so sure that when von Beust died you were born again and would commence a new life, that I feel compensated for the trouble I have taken to find my twin brother and restore him to his parents, who will see in him the loved child of their youthful days. For myself, your presence and my association with you give me great happiness, and I wish that we may go through life hand in hand together, and walk in virtue's ways until our death. We two together can defy the world, and, with your assistance, I hope once more to clasp sweet Flossy in my arms."

"My heart echoes all your wishes," said James, clasping his brother's hand. "I am indeed born again, but I am not, however, so bad as you think me. We have as yet had no explanation up to the present time, for my hands are tied, and I am bound by the strongest oaths to keep silent in relation to certain events. The torture of fire would not extract a confession from me, therefore you must wait patiently until I am at liberty to explain."

"I ask no explanations," replied Charles. "I am satisfied with the natural integrity of your character. You were hardly dealt with in your youthful years, and, though you can not altogether be excused for all that you have done, yet there are many mitigating circumstances in your case. But come, what have you left of your old disguise? That is now the question."

James went into the adjoining room, and returned with a bundle of clothes. "Here," he said, "is the disguise in which I escaped from New York. Very few persons have seen me in it. I seldom wore it in the day-time, and then only in cases of necessity." James unfolded the dress in which we have seen him at his house

in New York, and when he occasionally paid a visit to Flossy, she knowing him only as Mr. Robert, and Brice only knowing him in that dress. It consisted of a brown fustian suit and spotted scarf, a heavy tawny beard, an enameled silver nose, from which the skin was apparently peeling, and a number of small patches representing warts, or blotches, to be worn on the face. "Wait," said James, "and I will put on this disguise."

In five minutes more he appeared as *Robert le Diable*. Charles Gale started. "Ah!" he said, "I met you twice in that dress, and wondered who you were. If I had only known then you were my brother, what misfortunes might have been spared us! But all's well that ends well, and there is much happiness in store for us, if you so will it."

Mary came in at this moment, and started when she saw a strange man in the room with a face like the Baron von Beust.

James laughed. "Ah, my pretty sister, you thought the baron had come to life again. This is the beard he wore in his palmy days, and I am afraid I shall have to wear it for some time to come."

Then it was partly explained to Mary why a disguise was necessary on James's first entrance to New York, without letting her into her brother's secret history.

"I will love you just as much in this guise," she said, "as in any other. You are not as handsome, but you look every inch a man. I am so proud of my brothers that I would welcome them in any dress."

Everything being arranged to the satisfaction of our travelers, they started for Havre and took passage in the packet Sheridan for New York. After a pleasant passage of thirty days they arrived in the East River and hauled into the dock. The brothers and Mary, with Chic, took a carriage and drove to the house in Bowling Green, ordering the driver to let them out half a block from their home, as they wished to surprise their father and mother, who did not expect them so soon. An Irish servant-girl was standing on the door-step pretending to sweep the front entrance.

"Are Mr. and Mrs. Gale at home?" Charles inquired of her.

"Yis, sur," said the girl, "and glad they'll be to see company, for nivr the soul I see in the house except themselves."

"We will walk in then," said Charles, "and announce ourselves." They passed along the front entry until they came to the

dining-room, which they entered, and then opening the inside dining-room door a little, they peeped into the parlor.

There in the center of the room sat the African traveler, the *ci-devant* prime minister of the mighty King Tom Tom, with a skein of yarn on his outstretched hands, which Agnes, sitting in front of him, was diligently winding into a ball.

"Darling," said the traveler, "we were doing this nearly thirty years ago, and I hope we may be doing it thirty years hence. You are far more beautiful now than you were then."

Agnes stooped and kissed him, then went on winding her ball. "All I ask," said she, "is that our children may soon be here to partake of our happiness."

Tears stood in the eyes of the listeners as they looked upon this faithful and loving pair, when Mary, who could no longer restrain her impatience, slipped in on tiptoe and clasped her arms around her mother's neck. Charles and James followed.

The old traveler was in a quandary. He could not drop his hank of yarn, but he held out a hand to Mary and Charles. "And pray who is this?" he asked, looking at James.

"I am your long-lost son!" exclaimed the latter.

In a moment Agnes had her arms around her son's neck, while tears of joy sprung to her eyes. "O God!" she cried, "you are too good to me! I never deserved so much happiness! Come, dear husband, and embrace your son."

The old traveler came forward, still struggling with his skein of yarn. "Glad to see you, James," he said; "it has been some time since we met. How you have grown!" And he gave the young man a grip that would have broken ordinary fingers.

Five happier people were never seen than were assembled together in the parlor. It would be impossible to describe their transports, and it was long before they could settle down into a state of tranquillity.

James was, of course, the center of attraction. His mother sat with her hand in his. "Ah, my poor boy!" she exclaimed, "you have had harder times than Charles, and your beard makes you seem older than your years."

"He looks grand," said the old traveler; "just as I did at his age. I remember, after spending six months in Africa, my face and beard looked just like his; and when I came into the presence of Queen Tom Tom she held up her hands in admiration. Queen Gumbo Chaff never rested till she had secured a lock of my hair."

"We won't talk of that now, darling, said Agnes ; "you can tell James about Africa some other time."

"But my heart beats with emotion," said the traveler, "when I think how proud I should be in showing my two boys to the kings and queens of that blessed country. I am sure they would receive the highest offices in the gift of those wise sovereigns. We three could conquer all that country, where newspapers, lawyers, and preachers are unknown. Let us go there, Agnes, and take our children with us."

"We will think about it, darling ; but we must consider Mary and Harry, who are shortly to be married ; and Harry will have to remain here and take care of the bank, and you know that I could not live away from Mary."

"True," said the old traveler, sighing ; "I did not think of that ; but when they all get married they can take a bridal tour to those blessed dominions, and you and I can go along."

These happy people spent hours in each other's company, the brothers and sister recounting their travels in Europe, without, however, referring to the manner in which James had been found.

Mary had been let into as much of his history as would enable her to understand the necessity of caution in talking of the past. She knew that James had married Louise Morton, and had, for prudential reasons, been obliged to assume a disguise.

The maid had several times announced dinner, but her words were unheeded, and it was long after the dinner-hour when they sat down to a cold meal. They were too happy, however, to mind such a trifle, but enjoyed the meal with a relish such as they had rarely before experienced.

They had, indeed, but little more to wish for. Assembled around their cheerful fireside, they forgot the hard world, and sent up their thanks to God for his kindness and watchfulness, which had brought them safely into port after undergoing so many perils.

They had been borne along on the great wave of life and had been tossed amid its breakers on the rocky shore, but, though bruised and wounded in the struggle, they now were safely landed in a peaceful haven.

Not in storm and tempest would they live hereafter, but in love and forgetfulness of past miseries and misfortunes, which would seem to them but as a dream.

The bright sunset of life would fill their hearts with mellow

light, such as illuminates the velvet woods when the green slope throws its shadow in the hollow of the hills.

Their earnest prayer had been for strength to bear the heavy weight of care that had been placed upon their shoulders, and which would have driven many to despair.

But, though sorely tried, they were patient and abiding in faith, and now could with safety pluck the fennel-leaf from their cup, which would hereafter be brimming over with happiness.

Harry had come at once from the bank on hearing the news of his cousin's arrival, adding another happy member to the little coterie. The only one wanting to complete the circle was Flossy.

It was, of course, necessary to let Harry into the mystery of the new brother's disguise, and he, generous fellow that he was, and once a great friend of Deville, now again took him to his heart. Days passed, and these happy people seemed to take no note of time.

Charles Gale for the moment assumed his old character of Allan Dare, and spent most of his time at his former abode on William Street, sending out detectives in all directions, and working night and day in pursuit of his lost love, but without avail. Flossy seemed lost to him for ever, and he came to the conclusion, in which he was borne out by strong circumstantial evidence, that the scoundrel Brice had employed an agent to spirit her away for some reason of his own—perhaps to get rid of her as a witness in case of his being prosecuted for his breach of trust.

The consequence of all this excitement was a weakening of Charles Gale's physical powers. Still the determined will was there, and he never for a moment relaxed his exertions.

A month after his arrival home, when sitting one day amid his happy relatives and thinking of his lost Flossy, he suddenly turned to his brother and said, "James, do you remember that little fellow Harry captured from the river pirates, and whom he called *Bene Trovato*? That boy seemed to take a great fancy to you. Can you tell me anything of his history? While brooding over my own sorrows I had almost forgotten him. I placed him in an asylum where they thought there was a chance of his recovering his speech."

"I can not tell you much about him," answered James; "I saw him for the first time on board the schooner a year after I purchased her. In my visits on board I petted the boy a great deal, and he became attached to me, as you saw yourself. I know noth-

ing of his history except that the captain of the schooner told me he had been rescued from a wrecked ship, and that he was the only survivor."

"Who was this captain, and where can he be found?"

"That I can not tell even you. I am bound by my oath not to reveal anything concerning him, although I do not know that it would make much difference. No doubt he is lost in the crowd of adventurers that infest the world, and it would be impossible to find him."

"I am sorry to hear it," said Charles, "but I am now going to inquire after *Bene Trovato*, and see how his case stands. It will be a relief to my mind to go to-day and visit him. Will you go with me, although he may perhaps recognize you?"

"He certainly will," said James, "for this is the guise in which he always saw me, and his child's instinct found me out when I personated James Deville. Yet I will go with you, for I would like to see the little fellow again."

After taking lunch the brothers started off in a carriage toward Harlem, where the deaf and dumb asylum was situated.

On reaching the institution and stating their errand, the boy *Bene Trovato* was summoned, and came into the room looking as neat as possible, his cheeks glowing with health, and his large black eyes sparkling like diamonds.

He paused for a moment on the threshold, then sprang forward and caught James Gale by the hand and kissed it with rapture, looking up in his face with unmistakable pleasure. He then greeted Charles affectionately, after his fashion, but almost immediately returned to James, who was evidently the object of his veneration.

"Ah, *Bene*," said James, "you have not forgotten me then?"

"I never forget *you*," said the boy, to the surprise of the brothers.

"How is this?" inquired Charles of the attendant who had brought the boy in. "Have you good people performed a miracle?"

"We have performed no miracle, sir," replied the attendant. "We have simply removed an obstacle to the boy's speech, and enabled him to make use of his natural powers. We effected a cure not long after he came here, and now he talks fast enough when he pleases to do so."

"Tell us all about it," said Charles, patting the little fellow on the head, while *Bene Trovato's* face sparkled with pleasure.

"It is a short story and soon told," said the attendant. "We examined the organs of speech, and found a swelling under the tongue. This led to a closer examination, and it was found that a small silver wire had been inserted lengthwise in the tongue under the skin, and two shorter pieces crosswise, paralyzing the member and entirely preventing speech. We removed these wires, and, in the course of a month, the boy could pronounce several words, and his intercourse with persons who could speak gradually produced the result you now witness. The boy may be said to be still in his infancy, for he does not use as great a variety of words as other boys of his age; but he is a wonderfully apt scholar, and, in course of time, will have the full faculties of speech. But what has bothered the doctors is how and why these silver wires were placed under the tongue."

Charles Gale drew his own conclusions as to why such an act of cruelty had been performed on an innocent and helpless child, but said nothing to the attendant. He asked, however, to see the superintendent of the asylum. The latter corroborated all that had been told by the attendant, and, after a pleasant chat, the brothers left, carrying *Bene Trovato* with them to enjoy a few days' vacation.

When the boy got into the carriage he perched himself on James Gale's knee, and talked away in his imperfect fashion without seeming to remember that there had been a time when he could not speak at all, except with his intelligent eyes.

They returned to the city cheered by the innocent joyfulness of the child, arriving in Broadway just at dark, before the lazy lamp-lighters had finished their evening task. On arriving opposite the residence of Mr. Vandusen, which was brilliantly illuminated with gas, James proposed to Charles to discharge the carriage and walk. "We are no great distance," he said, "from my old home, which I would like to show you. Within its walls I passed the happiest hours of my life, devoting myself to a sweet child whose presence was like sunshine to me, and from whom I was separated by cruel fate. I have never mentioned this to you before, brother, for I have cherished it as a secret too sacred to be shared by any one."

"I can fully sympathize with you, James," said Charles, "for is not my heart at this moment torn with anguish when I think of Flossy? I will go with you to your former home, where you may gather some comfort from the remembrance of the past, though it

would be well if you could forget it all, now that the present has taken so fortunate a turn in your behalf."

As they alighted from the carriage a man, wrapped in a cloak and with his hat drawn over his eyes, walked rapidly past them, increasing his pace when he saw the three persons who had left the carriage, until he arrived at a corner where some empty tierces were piled, behind which he concealed himself.

As the brothers passed by he rose in seeming fear, and muttering to himself, "Both alive, or am I dreaming? Must I turn and escape from this new danger? No, I am safe, for they can know nothing of me or of my movements, and probably think I am hiding myself in some distant land. I will follow them if it costs me my life." Wrapping his cloak around him, and pulling his hat over his eyes, he pursued the brothers at a safe distance.

After a brisk walk Charles and James, with their young companion, arrived at James's house. The front was closed up, but there was a glimmer of light through the basement-window. "Ah!" said James, "they are still there as true to me as ever. Turn down this alley, brother, and I will let you in at the side gate."

They passed down the alley, still watched by the sharp eyes of the man who was following them, and, when they came to a certain spot in the wall, James placed his finger on a secret knob, when a large stone swung aside to admit them.

Charles was surprised. "No wonder," thought he, "that Belette and Tormenteur were baffled when they tracked *Robert le Diable*, and then lost all clew to him."

James took the boy by the hand, and, whispering to his brother to proceed with caution and in quiet, led the way into the house through the channels heretofore described.

A low whine was heard, and the rattle of a chain.

"What is that noise?" whispered Charles; "it sounds like the whine of some animal."

"It is one of the most faithful of my friends—one that never forgets me. She knows already that I am here. Thank God she is alive!"

At length they stood in the paneled room. "Stand still," said James, "until I get a light."

He touched a knob, and the cuckoo-clock gave out its melodious sounds. Presently there was heard the sound of feet coming up the stairs; the door was opened, and Nimble entered, bearing two lighted candles, which he placed upon the table. Then he knelt

and kissed his master's hand. "Welcome home, sir," said he. "I knew you would soon be here, Aysha has been so restless of late."

"And how are the rest of the household?" asked James.

"All well, sir," replied the boy, "and await your orders."

James patted him on the head. "You have done well to await me. I return to leave you no more; there will be a new life for us. This is my brother, Nimble; and this boy, Charles, is our *protégé*. Now, Nimble, leave us for a little while, when I will admit you all. I want to talk to my brother." The boy bowed and withdrew.

"Here, brother," said James, "I have passed the happiest and most innocent hours of my life. When I entered these doors I left all thought of sin behind, for she who dwelt here was so pure that nothing in the shape of sin could exist in her presence. I bought this house that I might have one sacred spot on earth to which I could repair at times and forget the world and its miseries. The sweet child who fitted around this abode like a beautiful fairy reigned here supreme, and, in my absence, devoted herself to her studies to fit herself for the high station in life I intended she should occupy when I had amassed the wealth I meant should be hers. For a long time I thought of her as the sweet child of my adoption, until one day, when too late, my eyes were opened to the fact that she was necessary to my happiness. Look!"

Opening a panel in the wall, James took from the recess a picture. It was the likeness of a beautiful girl in an Albanian costume, her face full of expression, and Charles thought he had never seen a lovelier picture.

"Was she as beautiful as this?" inquired Charles.

"In person, yes," replied his brother; "in mind she was transcendent. It is Myra, the light of my soul; but sit down, and I will tell you all about her. I can not do justice to her in words. She was like an April day when the warm sun brings forth the first flowers of the plain, and the warbling of the birds is heard in the trees just putting forth their velvet buds, while the bright colors of the tiny songsters glance in the mellow sunlight which seeks the bright openings in the forest glades. Oh! how my heart is wedded to the bright memories connected with her youth, which threw such enchantment around these rooms! There is no more spring here for me, but rather the piercing blast of dismal winter. Where the green vine once hung around the sturdy oak, warming its heart, now will hang the crystal icicle, chilling its sap. No more the birds, caroling their merry lays, will perch upon the branches of the once

green and inviting tree, and my ear must needs grow familiar with the sounds of wintry winds and chilling airs. My heart alone can never forget the sweet music of the past, though it may come to me through frosty atmosphere and be borne along on the bitter blasts of winter. But sit down and listen to my story, and if ever you had tears to shed for your wayward brother, prepare to shed them now."

Charles pressed his hand, saying, "Be of good cheer; there is always a silver lining to the darkest cloud."

They sat down together, and for two hours James Gale told his brother that part of the story of his life that related to Myra. He spoke, too, of the bitterness he felt when he found out too late how he loved her, and how unworthy was the woman to whom he had been irrevocably tied for life.

Charles Gale could scarcely restrain his tears on hearing his brother's story, and it required all his strong will not to appear unmanned.

"There," said James, when he had finished, "you know all about me now that I am permitted to tell. Come, it is getting late; we will have some supper, and then to bed. You can sleep in a house where innocence has dwelt, and where nothing has ever occurred to make me feel ashamed."

He rose to touch the knob which sounded the cuckoo-clock, when suddenly there came from the porch a low, dismal howl, accompanied with angry growls, a shriek as from a human being, a scuffle and the rattling of a chain, a fall on the floor of the porch. Then all was still except the faint whinings of the animal.

All listened intently. "Some one is trying to get into the house," exclaimed James, "or Aysha would not go on in this manner." Taking a candle from the mantel-piece, he went out, followed by his brother and *Bene Trovato*.

When the light of the candle shone upon the porch a painful scene met their eyes. The lioness lay on her side, apparently dead, with a long knife thrust into her side. Her right paw rested on a prostrate man, who seemed also to be dead. The animal had evidently struck him while he was standing up, for his clothing was torn from his left side, and the blood was streaming from his person and running in rills over the floor.

"An attempt at burglary," said Charles, placing his hand on the man's heart. "But he still lives. This person is dressed like a gentleman, and I think, on consideration, that some other motive

than robbery brought him here. Let us get him into the house and put him on a cot."

The sound of the conflict had brought Mrs. Reed, the old housekeeper, to the spot, together with Walter and Nimble. James greeted them warmly as they came up to him, while Nimble threw himself upon the body of the lioness and sobbed as if his heart would break. "She is not dead!" he exclaimed, as the animal put out her tongue to lick his hand. "She knows me. O master! do try to save her."

James approached his old and firm friend and knelt beside her. The lioness looked up with a faint gleam of joy in her eyes, and tried to rise, but could not do so. She licked his hand, and then, stretching herself at full length, gave one gasp and died.

"Farewell, faithful friend," said her master; "this is another drop in my cup of misery; but I must bear my load. God intends all these trials as part of my purification before I can stand erect again before my fellow-men. But come, Mrs. Reed, while we dally here the life of a man is at stake. Get a cot in the paneled room, with mattress, pillows, and everything necessary, and, Nimble, go at once for a doctor."

When everything was ready, the brothers lifted the wounded man and laid him on a cot in the paneled room, the stranger moaning as they carried him.

"A good sign," said Charles; "he may live. Mrs. Reed, please bring me a sponge and some tepid water. I will examine his wounds."

When his request was complied with, Charles commenced his examination by wiping away the blood from the man's body. Four of the ribs had been completely crushed in by a blow of the lioness's paw, and the flesh was torn away in all directions. Aysa's last blow was an effective one; it was the crowning act of her love for a master that had been so kind to her. Her last heart's blood flowed for him.

After Charles had made a thorough examination of the man's injuries he said, "I think he has no chance whatever. The ribs seem to be shattered, and he must have other severe internal injuries. The blow barely escaped the lungs, and is almost equal to a cannon-shot. Give me more light, and let me examine his face."

Two candles were held so that the light fell full in the face of the wounded man. His countenance was contorted with pain, his

closed eyes sunken in, and his lips compressed. He breathed convulsively, and apparently had not many moments to live.

"This is a strange position for such a man to be in," said Charles. "He has the appearance of a gentleman, is fashionably dressed, and carries a watch set with diamonds. It must have been accident that brought him here. He seems more like a lover keeping an appointment with his mistress than a robber, yet what would a lover want with such a murderous knife as the one with which the lioness was killed? I can not understand it. What a dark face he has! like an Arab, and his hair is black as a raven's wing. See what beautiful kid gloves he wears on his shapely hands! Let us remove them; it will give him a little relief."

The gloves were taken off, revealing small white hands like those of a woman. On the little finger of the left hand was a valuable signet ring.

"This ring may tell us something," said Charles; but at this moment the door opened, and Nimble ushered in Dr. Ernest, a middle-aged physician, a bright, keen man, who seemed to thoroughly understand his business.

The doctor bowed to the company and examined the patient on the cot. "A bad case. How did it happen?" he inquired.

The main facts were briefly explained to him.

The doctor shook his head. "There is no hope whatever of his living more than a few hours. What an unnatural skin! he should be deadly pale, whereas his complexion is a rich brown."

All this time *Bene Trovato* had stood near the cot, the picture of terror. His right hand was pointing to the wounded man, and his lips moved as if he would speak but could not. At last the doctor noticed him. "What is the matter with the boy?" he inquired; "is he subject to fits?"

"What troubles you?" said James, kindly, taking the boy's hand.

James's touch seemed to restore his faculties. He stammered out, "That is the captain; I know him!"

"What captain?" inquired James.

"The captain of the schooner—Captain Saigneur, as the crew called him. He has his hair on now; take it off and you will see."

James looked closely into the wounded man's face. "Come here, Charles," said he; "you will see what this man meant by his visit. This is Count Conti, who tried to assassinate us, and who ran off with the schooner and that woman."

"So it is," said Charles, after closely scrutinizing the man's face. "There is no doubt what his errand was. But for your lions we might both have fallen victims to his bloody knife."

"This man's face is colored," said the doctor; "I can remove the stain." And taking from his pocket a leather case, he selected two small bottles and mixed their contents in a cup. Then he passed a sponge saturated with the compound over the man's face, causing the brown tint to disappear, and in its place was seen the light Anglo-Saxon complexion of a man of about thirty years, with the beauty of a young girl.

"Now take off his hair," said *Bene Trovato*.

A light and beautiful wig, which fitted with the utmost nicety, was now removed, revealing soft hair of a golden hue.

"By all that's sacred!" exclaimed Charles, "this is no other than George May—your dearest friend, James, and my bitter enemy, though for what reason I know not."

"It is he, sure enough," replied James. "I see it all. George May and Conti were one and the same person, yet I was such a fool that I did not see it."

"Nor I," said Charles, "with all my experience as a detective. Yet the instinct of this child was keener than all our boasted shrewdness. What does it mean? I once suspected him of being engaged in illicit practices, but he threw me completely off the track."

"Thank God for one thing!" exclaimed James. "I am free now to tell you all, for this man's death will absolve me from my oath."

"All the world seems to have been leagued against you," said Charles; "and this, your supposed dearest friend, has been plotting your ruin from the first. Every act of his was intended to harm you, and, while you were giving him your affection, he was working your destruction. But let us take the boy and question him." Going into another room with *Bene Trovato*, Charles asked him what he could tell them about the injured man.

"That is Captain Saigneur," replied the boy. "He made the people walk the plank. He shot into ships and sunk them. Ah! he was so cruel! He sometimes killed his own men; they were all afraid of him, and only called him Captain Saigneur when alone by themselves. He it was who put the wire under my tongue, but he did it while I was asleep, and I did not feel it much. I used to see him change his dress, and put on his different wigs and paint

his face ; so I knew him, and it frightened me so that I could not speak."

"It seems," said James, "that, thinking I was engaged in smuggling only, I was really the accomplice of a pirate."

They questioned the boy still further. He had evidently forgotten nothing, and described all he knew in his own peculiar style of speech. George May was in fact the captain of the schooner when she went to sea on her roving expeditions. She would meet a vessel in Gardiner's Bay, or off Montauk Point or Block Island, and valuable cargoes would be transferred to her, the schooner depositing the same in Jacob Moses's warehouse. Sometimes Captain Saigneur would rob ships on his own account, and then sink them, murdering their passengers and crew. The captain always stayed in the cabin until the vessel was out at sea. The boy gave a dreadful account of him—such as made the blood of his listeners run cold.

"I understand everything now," said James. "Shortly after I became acquainted with May he proposed to me to enter into the smuggling business. I was to buy a large and a small schooner, the former to go to sea and transfer valuable cargoes from European or China ships, the other to serve for various purposes necessary in smuggling. Of course I do not mean to justify myself for entering into such a scheme."

"I shall not reproach you," said Charles ; "let the past be forgotten. Now, *Bene*, tell us what part you played in all this business."

"They used to cut out a window-pane and put me through, so that I could unlock the door from the inside," replied the boy. "I thought it great fun then, but I know better now. I always went up the river with the crew when they went to rob houses. Captain Saigneur did not go along ; another man had command then—a Frenchman called *Mate Voleur*, who robbed a great many houses, and often went at night to Hawks' Roost to get orders from the captain. It was after robbing a house in the country that I was taken and led to that happy home."

"The wretch mutilated you," said Charles, "so that you could not give evidence against him in case you were caught ?"

"Yes, I suppose so," replied the boy.

In the course of an hour they had obtained all the information they wanted from *Bene Trovato*, from which it appeared that James Gale had never taken any part in the nefarious transactions of May.

He had indeed purchased the two vessels and Jacob Moses's storehouse at May's instigation, but solely for the purpose of smuggling. He admitted that he had several times gone in the schooner to Gardiner's Bay to take valuable goods from other vessels whose captains were engaged in the smuggling trade, but that George May never went with him, the Frenchman, Voleur, acting as captain. "Sometimes," said James, "I would go down to Sandy Hook in the schooner, and sup on board in the cabin, which I had fitted up sumptuously, but May never accompanied me."

"But he was on board all the time," said the boy, "disguised as one of the crew; and when you left the vessel he would take command, and it was he who made the people on board the ships walk the plank."

"Truth is stranger than fiction," said Charles. "What a chapter this man's life would furnish for the Newgate Calendar! Let us go now into the next room and see what the doctor says."

They found that the doctor had cut away all the clothing from the wounded man, and was applying styptics and plasters to his body.

"It is only temporary relief," said the doctor; "his race is run. If he lives twenty-four hours longer it is as much as can be expected. Mortification will set in, but he will die free from pain, and perhaps conscious."

The wounded man now began to move uneasily, and to moan as if in great pain. Anodynes were given him from time to time, and as he slept he talked incoherently. "Run out the plank and let him walk! There, there, see that old man how he struggles! He will reach the ship again! Shoot him! don't let him reach me!" Then he would cry out, "Don't let me see them drown! Hard up, and run off before the wind!" So he went on through the night, while his ravings made the blood of the watchers curdle.

Contrary to the doctor's prediction, May lived three days, and on the third became quiet and conscious, mortification having set in.

"Where am I?" he exclaimed when he came to himself; "is this a dream, or have I encountered the devil?"

"You are among friends," said the doctor, "who are taking all possible care of you; but you must not talk."

"*Friends!*" he exclaimed; "I have no friends. I am a power unto myself. I must get up, for I have much to do."

"I am sorry to inform you," said the doctor, "that you will

not be able to get up for a long time. You are badly wounded, and it is always well for persons so situated to arrange their worldly affairs. You, no doubt, are a brave man, and can bear to hear the truth."

"Is it as bad as that?" inquired the wounded man. "Well, better so. I am not thirty years old, and that is young to die; but in sin I am at least a century."

At that moment the brothers quietly entered the room. The doctor sat by the side of the cot, holding the patient's hand—the small, white, beautiful hand that looked as if it had done nothing in life more serious than signing *billets-doux* to fair ladies.

"Ah!" exclaimed the invalid, as his eyes rested on the brothers, "you both live, but through no fault of mine. But for that devil's claws you would both have been in Tartarus ere this."

"What have we done," asked Charles, "to call forth such rancorous feeling on your part?"

"You," he replied, "I hated because you outstripped me in every manly accomplishment, and would in the end have handed me to the gallows; your brother I hated because he stole from me the heart of the woman I loved."

"I am sorry I did not resign her to you," said James; "it would have saved me much misery, and you from a great crime."

"Crime!" he sneered; "what cared I for crime, if I could obtain what I coveted?"

"Come," interposed the doctor, "this must not go on; this is hastening your death. You must not talk."

"I will talk while I can," replied May, "since I know that I have but a short time to live. What matters it whether I live an hour, more or less? I must tell these two men what they should know. One of them I would exonerate. As for Vere Saye—well, I don't care about him. I hate him, and can not change even in the face of death."

By this time May had become exhausted, and, the doctor insisting on giving him an anodyne, he slept.

"What revelations this man could make!" said Charles as he left the room with his brother; "and how handsome he still looks! I trust he will live long enough to enable us to learn his history. It will not be a moral tale, but will no doubt elucidate many things that at present appear mysterious."

"What hatred he shows toward us!" said James; "yet May at one time professed to love me better than any one else on earth."

He was even willing I should marry the woman he loved. But he ran off with her at last. I wonder what has become of the poor wretch. Such women sink into the lowest depths of degradation, and never rise again from the soil and filth with which they are begrimed. No doubt he threw her off when tired of her, or perhaps took her away to be revenged upon her. If so, I pity her fate, and would willingly, if in my power, rescue her."

"Leave all to Providence," said Charles. "Everything will come right in the end, although the guilty must suffer for their crimes. In all my experience among hardened criminals, I have never yet seen such a one as George May. His eye never quailed when he looked in our faces, and even in his last moments I believe it would give him pleasure could he put us to death.

"Who can ever forget the reputation for virtue that May possessed, and how every one loved him? Who would have thought to find in him a pirate and robber? Why, most of those who knew him would laugh at the idea; yet what muscles of steel he had under that delicate appearance, what coolness at all times, and what skill in manly sports! Do you remember how he wounded that noble fellow Conrad? I believe now that it was pre-arranged." So they talked until late at night, comparing one thing with another, until many events, that seemed obscure before, unfolded themselves during the conversation.

It was nearly daylight before they retired, and they slept until late.

A short time after the brothers had finished breakfast next morning they were informed by the doctor that the wounded man desired to see them. They found him lying quietly, his large blue eyes wide open, and gazing around with a most innocent expression. Who, to look at him lying there, would suspect that he had been guilty of the most horrible crimes?

"Well," said he, looking calmly at the brothers, "you will soon see the last of me. But you shall not have the satisfaction of seeing me quail at the approach of death. I was never a coward; you both will admit that; and now I will show you how to die. Before I go I wish to leave a statement of my doings, that the world of New York may know their pet Adonis was a bloody pirate, a house-breaker, a cruel murderer. I am proud of it all, and I do not want anything concealed. How the sweet girls who have hung enraptured on my smiles will pale when they know that their names have been linked with that of a pirate! Get me a clever clerk to take

down all I say, and then I will certify to it in the presence of you all."

"I will undertake that duty," said the physician. "I am a rapid penman."

"Then begin your work, for I feel comparatively strong, and would make my statement while in the humor. It will be short, but to the point."

Provided with materials for writing, the doctor sat down to his task, and George May proceeded with the narrative of his life.

"I was born near Chelmsford, County of Essex, in England, nearly thirty years ago. You are surprised at my years, as I look so young. Though young in years I am old in crime, and wish I could have lived to carry out my ideas. Man lives for reputation; some try to get it through great mercantile transactions, others wish to shine in the forum, others seek the bubble at the cannon's mouth. I chose the path of a villain as the easiest method of distinction. My true name is George Carrolton."

Charles Gale started, and listened with increased interest.

"I need not dwell on the days of my youth. When twelve years old I had committed almost every crime in the calendar. My father died of a broken heart on account of my misdeeds, and my mother soon followed him, leaving me and a little sister in care of an uncle who was made executor to my father's estate, which was considerable.

"This uncle was a wretch, who persecuted me in every way, and made life a burden, until finally he placed me on board a British ship-of-war, where I finished the education so recklessly begun at home. At the age of eighteen I was an adept in every species of iniquity, and, as the navy offered no scope for my ambition, I ran away and joined a gang of burglars in London.

"I was the most successful house-breaker ever known, and, though strongly suspected by the police, was never captured. I amassed considerable wealth, and, London becoming at last too hot to hold me, I determined to go down to Chelmsford, see my uncle, and claim my patrimony. On arriving at that place, I found my uncle had removed to London, where he was cashier, or something else, of a bank. I regretted that I had not known of this before, that I might have broken into his bank and left my card upon his desk. He was a great scoundrel, and I felt sure that I should never see anything of what my father had left me.

"I then went to sea for a while, so that the police would lose

sight of me, and finally came to America. I found the people hospitable, and, flattering myself that I had a good address, I devoted my money to the purchase of a fashionable wardrobe, and forged letters of introduction, assuming the name of George May.

"I found no difficulty in obtaining admittance into good society, where I met my fate in the person of the beautiful but vile Louise Morton, and formed the acquaintance of James Deville.

"Finding the latter to be of a generous and confiding disposition, I determined to make him the stepping-stone to my fortune. Both of you brothers know of all the events connected with that intimacy, but there are some things I must mention to acquit James of blame. I induced him to enter into the smuggling business, in which he was joined by some of the most important people in town. I connected house-breaking, street robbery, murder on the high seas, and river-piracy with my smuggling venture, but Deville had nothing to do with them.

"I once induced him, on the plea that I was ill, to go over the city and paste wafers on a number of houses, assuring him that this was the signal for those who expected smuggled goods from us to come to Jacob Moses's store, when in fact the signals were posted for those who were my assistants in house-breaking, and who were to meet me at Jacob Moses's restaurant, where all our employees met at certain times to give me information and receive pay for their services.

"I was the solely authorized one to enlist the crews of the smuggling vessels, and you may be sure I employed a choice set, who were not only my confederates at sea, but my comrades on shore, and yet I was so thoroughly disguised that not one of them ever knew me. You can judge for yourselves what an adept I was at the business.

"My strength fails me, and I can only give an outline of my doings. I will simply tell you I am the pirate who robbed and sunk the vessels that have been missing of late, making all on board walk the plank.

"I am the one who instigated all the robberies up the Hudson River. I am the murderer of Edgar Lane. Having overheard a conversation between him and his wife, Louise Morton, I determined to make way with him. She had told me there was one obstacle in her path to her marriage with me, and from their conversation I found that Edgar Lane was that obstacle. I was concealed in one of the grottoes in the garden on the night of the murder, and

heard all their conversation. After the murder I flew to join the party at the house, and was never suspected."

"Except by me," said Charles Gale; "I suspected you."

"I thought so," replied May, "and for those reasons determined to ruin you if I could. I felt your hawk's-eye always upon me. I was also the murderer of Captain Conrad," he continued; "he cheated me of my love, and I determined to remove him from my path. I wounded him at the tournament with a poisoned foil prepared for the occasion. I became his constant attendant during his illness, and mixed slow poison in his drinks. Yet it was all in vain; that woman turned from me after all my efforts to win her."

"When she offered herself to James Deville I left Hawks' Roost, determined to be revenged on her before I died, and I was revenged. To revenge myself on Vere Saye, I stole from Holmes's farm Flossy Carrolton, the girl he loved. That was indeed a triumph!"

Charles Gale jumped from his chair and approached the dying man. "My God!" he exclaimed, "did you do that? You are indeed a wretch, and I never suspected you; I thought it was Brice, or Carrolton, as he was called. Where is she? Tell me, or God only knows what I may be tempted to do."

"Have I made the galled jade wince?" exclaimed May. "I thought I would wound you in the tenderest part, and I glory in it. I had a right to remove my sister from the toils of an adventurer, who passed himself off as a gentleman of family, while in fact he was an escaped convict from the galleys of Toulon."

"Weak as you are," said Charles, "I tell you you lie! You are indeed a demon. My God! to think that you should claim that sweet girl as your sister. There is some mistake in all this. As you hope for mercy hereafter, tell the truth."

"Hereafter!" sneered May; "my heaven was on earth. I believe in no soul, or in future joys or punishments. I believe in the electric spark that animates the human frame, and when you break the circuit, as they call it, life goes out in a man as in a cat or dog."

"God have mercy on your soul!" said Charles; "may he have pity on you in consideration of the ignorance in which you have been brought up, and pardon your sins. But tell me, is Flossy indeed your sister?"

"Brice," continued the dying man, "is the uncle of whom I spoke, who treated me so badly in my youth. He separated me

from my sister when she was but two years old, and, after committing several criminal offenses in England, he emigrated to America with Flossy, whom he called his daughter. The moment I saw him at Hawks' Roost I recognized him, although I had entirely outgrown his recollection. I saw in Flossy a cousin, supposing her to be Brice's child, although I thought she might be the little sister I had parted from so many years ago. I had not sufficient sentiment to wish to be hampered with a sister, but I bided my time to be even with Brice, and was glad when you arrested him. I heard that story from Mrs. Eton. I kept him in view, and, when he was on the eve of departure for Europe, I wrote to the police authorities in England. I went on board the ship in which he had taken passage, and discovered myself to Brice. I found out that Flossy was indeed my sister, and, after calling Brice every opprobrious name I could think of, with my pistol to his head, I slapped his face and left him. I then found out you had taken Flossy, and, supposing you intended soon to marry her, I determined to steal her away. I finally succeeded in carrying her off, under circumstances which you know. When I got Flossy on board the sloop I proclaimed myself her brother, and gave as a reason for my conduct that you, Vere Saye, were a low adventurer, an escaped convict, and a murderer, who would lead her to destruction."

"Wretch!" exclaimed Charles, with flashing eyes.

"To see the imperturbable Vere Saye show such excitement," said May, "is sufficient satisfaction for me. I have stricken you to the heart. It is quite enough for me to know that my sister believed every word I said to her, and now despises you more than she ever loved you. I lost no time in placing her beyond your reach, under protection of those who would never give you a chance of seeing her again. I see by your face that I have had my revenge."

Charles Gale turned away and walked to the window. It was useless to show his anger to a dying man, and it was some satisfaction to know that Flossy was safe.

May, after resting a while to recover his breath, continued the narrative of his career.

"After placing my sister under proper protection, I started for Europe, determined to ruin James Deville. I found him with his wife at Monaco, under the assumed name of Baron von Beust. I took the name of Count Conti, an Italian nobleman whom I had met in Naples, who was an invalid, never stirred from home, and

was known to but few. Under this name I passed at Monaco, and, when I recognized in the tawny beard which you now wear, James Deville, the Baron von Benst, I determined on your destruction. I did all in my power to develop the iniquity of your wife's character. She was indeed an apter scholar than I had ever dreamed of.

"You, Deville, know all the rest. How I tried to kill you, and thought I had succeeded. I then ran off with your wife and schooner, and led *la belle Autrichienne*, as she was called, into a path of crime that sickened even her. I had my full revenge. She never dreamed who I was until I was tired of her. Then I turned her adrift among the crew. Finally, at the request of the crew, I put her on board a ship bound to New York, with a few doubloons with which to support herself for a short time. Ere she went I told her who I was, and laughed in her face at my complete revenge."

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed James, "could God permit such a wretch as you to live? Where is the poor creature now?"

"I do not know, nor do I care. She is somewhere in the slums of New York probably. Such women soon find the lowest level. But I must close, for my strength fails me. I met you two in the street the night that animal struck me, and recognized you at once, though I thought I had killed one and wounded the other in a vital part. I followed you to this house, and, when you vanished apparently through the wall, I sought an entrance but could find none. The wall was too high to scale. I remembered a wooden horse-block I had seen in the next street, and brought it around to the alley, and, with the help of this, I succeeded in getting over. With a step-ladder I mounted to the porch, and, just as I planted my feet upon the floor, a huge animal sprang upon me. I thrust my knife into the brute, and received a blow which has brought me to my present condition. There, you know all of my history that concerns you. I can talk no more."

"Will you answer me one question?" said Charles Gale. "Where is Flossy? If I prove to you that I was never a convict, as you have stated, and that I am a gentleman of wealth, able to give your sister every comfort and luxury, will you give me the information?"

May slowly opened his eyes, for he was evidently much fatigued by his exertions; but there was a look of triumph in his eye as he replied, "No! If I have one satisfaction greater than another, it is that I shall die with the consciousness that I have thwarted you

at the last—the cool, imperturbable Vere Saye, the convict, the low adventurer. I do not believe your tale of wealth and gentlemanly character; the jackal can not change to the kid, nor the hungry hawk to the harmless dove. Go, I want to be quiet, and do not come again until I am dead. Then you may gloat over my remains to your heart's content."

At this moment *Bene Trovato* came into the room and stood by James Gale, caressing the latter's hand.

"Ah, Canema!" exclaimed May, looking kindly at him, "come here and take my hand. It is long since I have seen you, and you are the only one on earth whose forgiveness I would ask."

Bene Trovato went to the cot and placed his hand in that of the dying man.

"This boy," said he, "I stole from the island of Cuba when he was five years old. I was then in the schooner on a piratical raid, and went up the River Canema, a beautiful stream near Matanzas. I heard of rich planters up that river, and started with two boats and twenty men to rob them. I intended to get there before daylight, but did not arrive at the first plantation until eight in the morning. As I approached I saw a large number of negroes barricading the house, directed by a white man. They evidently knew our errand. The negroes fired on us, wounding two of my men. I rushed upon them and drove them off, killing several of them.

"Presently they returned with re-enforcements, headed by the white man. He was knocked down by one of my men with the butt of a musket, when a beautiful Creole woman, with a boy clinging to her skirts, rushed from the house and threw herself upon his body. I snatched up the child and beat a retreat, as there came a hot fusillade from the upper windows of the house, and a large number of negroes, armed with *machetes*, were rushing toward us from the rear of the out-buildings. We had lost three men killed and five wounded, and I thought it time to get back to the boats. The only booty we captured was the boy. His parents live on the right bank of the Canema. See him restored to them. Good-by, Canema; I hope you forgive me."

"Yes, Captain Saigneur," said *Bene Trovato*, "I forgive you, I forgive you."

"Ah, you talk then?" said May; "it is well. I suppose this is a miracle of the saints! You can tell these men a good deal of my history which I had not time to do. Now leave me, all of you. I do not want to be disturbed again."

"Come, James," said his brother, "we can do no good by staying here. We leave him in your charge, doctor, and may God have mercy on his soul."

That was the last they saw of George May. He died that night, seemingly without pain, passing away as peacefully as if his whole life had been consecrated to virtue. His last words were, "I shall soon know if I have a soul."

When laid in his coffin he looked like a beautiful wax-figure. His pale face, with the rich flaxen curls that clustered around his forehead, looked like the picture of one who had gently sunk to sleep and would waken, when summoned by the heavenly angels, to enter the realms of bliss. There was no trace of the outlaw in those peaceful-looking remains. He was beautiful in person while living, and carried his beauty with him to the grave, down to the corruption which finally overtakes the bodies of the good and of the bad, where, overshadowed by the cypress, all human forms fare alike, while souls go flitting to the abodes prepared for them.

A coroner's inquest had to be held over the body, and the verdict, in accordance with the evidence, was death by the blow of an infuriated lion.

The brothers had the remains of George May interred in a quiet suburban cemetery, the grave being marked at the head and foot by simple stones, on one of which was the name and age of the deceased.

That was the last of the handsome and fascinating George May, who, with mind and accomplishments fitted for the highest sphere, perversely preferred the career of an outlaw.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE CONVENT OF THE SACRED CROSS.

THE brothers had been four days at James Gale's house when one morning the housekeeper came into the room where James was sitting and handed him an open letter. "It is from Myra," she said, "and I lost no time in bringing it to you."

He seized it eagerly, saying, "I will read it and return it to you presently."

When the housekeeper left the room he devoured the contents of the letter. As he read, tears sprang to his eyes, and when he had finished, a great sob burst from his heart. "Ah!" he exclaimed, "I am like Sisyphus. I roll my stone day by day up the steep acclivity, and just as I am about to reach the summit, down it comes and crushes me. Yet why should I demur to this? Myra is not for me; she belongs of right to heaven, for only of such can angels be made. There is a barrier that will keep us apart for ever. Even if I were free she could not link her fate to mine; she would soil her soul by contact with one so impure. She thinks me dead, and would dedicate her life to pray for my eternal happiness. It is better that she be left to think I am no more. Why should I disturb her mind with the news that I am still alive, when it will do no earthly good? Perhaps in years to come, when I can stand before the world as an upright, honorable man, and time and repentance has washed from my soul the sins of the past, I may let her know that I live and that her prayers have not been in vain."

He kissed Myra's letter a hundred times amid sighs and tears. It was balm to his soul, even though the news it contained dissevered him for ever from all he held most dear on earth.

The letter ran as follows:

"CONVENT OF THE SACRED CROSS.

"MY DEAREST FRIEND AND MOTHER: I write to bid you an eternal farewell on this side of the grave, unless you will come and see me before I take the final vows to become a Sister of the Sacred Cross. The preliminary steps will be taken in two days, and in a week after I shall take the vows to give up the world and all its pleasures.

"What is the world to me now? When I heard that Mr. Robert was dead my soul died also. All connected with the earth, except in the way of charity, is a blank to me. I shall try to live—though life is burdensome—to be able to pray for the soul of him whom I loved with all the ardor of my heart.

"I hope my prayers will help to lighten the load he will have to bear while he is undergoing purification, and I look forward to sitting by his side in paradise. I hope such thoughts are not sinful, but heaven has given weak humanity a heart to love and pray for those in adversity, and, while we may not cling to the flesh, yet we may try by prayer to redeem those whose misfortunes have swept them into realms of woe.

"Thank you for all your great kindness to me since my early

youth. I should not be happy did I not bid you a last farewell ere I am for ever shut out from the world. Your affectionate

“MYRA.”

After reading the letter over and over again, James suddenly jumped to his feet.

“Why should I not go and see her?” he exclaimed. “Is it not better that she should know I am living, and am not the vile character she supposes? Will she not be happier in the knowledge that I am living and can repent of my sins, than to think me dead with all my imperfections on my head? We are parted for ever, yet it will cheer me through life to know that I have once more taken her hand before the convent-doors finally shut her out from the world. Oh! how she will rejoice to see me alive, and how it will gladden her heart to know that I repent of my sins, and that I have already cleared myself of the charges brought against me in Paris! Yes, I will go to Myra and will tell her all. Perhaps I may once more take her in my arms and imprint a parting kiss upon her innocent lips. Yes, I will go, even if the parting from her kills me.”

With this determination James sought his brother. Charles was in the adjoining room, smoking his cigar and thinking over the difficulties he had encountered in finding Flossy. Although his efforts had been unceasing, the wretches that detained her had so far baffled them and those of his best detectives.

“Could George May have taken Flossy to Europe and placed her in some convent?” he asked himself. His heart ached as the idea occurred to him.

Charles Gale had of late years been so entangled with criminals, and had seen to what lengths depravity would carry both man and woman, that he felt his enemy would not have hesitated at anything to attain his object. He was rather pleased when his brother came in to interrupt his meditations.

James handed his brother Myra’s letter, saying, “Tell me what you think of it? I must see her before she leaves the world for ever.”

Charles read the letter and replied, “Of course, go and see her. I will accompany you. I need something to cheer me up. I would like to see the lovely girl who so cherishes your memory that she is willing to devote her life to prayers for your soul. Let us start at once, for it is something of a ride.”

James Gale was delighted with his brother's compliance. A carriage was called, and, taking *Bene Trovato* with them, they started for the convent. After a three-hours' ride they alighted at the main convent-gate, which was closed and apparently locked. On the arch of the main entrance was inscribed in golden letters :

"Whosoever enters here in pure faith will find peace and rest on earth and eternal joy hereafter."

"A pleasing motto," said James Gale. "I wish I had entered here years ago. What a load of sin I would have escaped !"

"Do not harp on that," replied Charles, cheerfully ; "be thankful matters are no worse, and avoid gloomy thought."

It was now the month of June, and the convent-garden was ablaze with roses of the richest hue.

"I can well imagine," remarked Charles, "what a healing balm these sacred roses distill upon the air. Their balmy fragrance is diffused through every cranny of that convent, and charms away sorrow from many a pining heart. It preserves even the inurned clay from decomposition, and when the flower fades, pines, and dies, unlike the human race, it preserves its sweetness to the last ; its balmy breath, pure as in early youth, diffuses its odors until it is wrapped in death."

As they walked along, talking and admiring the beauty of the convent-grounds, they reached the front-door of the building, where two huge dogs were reclining in the sun. Both animals immediately rose and met the brothers with threatening looks, growling and showing their teeth.

"This is rather a cold welcome, James," said Charles. "I am afraid we will have to return to the carriage until we can gain admittance in a more peaceable way. You and I could easily strangle those brutes if they attacked us, but that would not be a handsome way to obtain admittance to a peaceful convent. I should think the Sisters would keep a milder class of dogs, though these seem to be of the St. Bernard breed, which are the kindest and most benevolent creatures—if I may use the expression—on the face of the earth. But dogs are wise animals, and can often look into the motives of men. Perhaps they descry in us characteristics which we know not of ourselves. Children and dogs, it is said, are the best physiognomists in the world. Their greeting is certainly not complimentary to us."

"Let us speak to them, and order them away," said James ; "perhaps they will leave. Get out, you brutes !" he exclaimed ;

"begone to your dens!" But the dogs did not obey; on the contrary, they advanced toward the brothers with backs raised and hair on end, and foaming at their mouths.

"They evidently do not like our size and proportions," said Charles, laughing; "they perhaps take us for two giants come to carry off the holy Sisters. It is evident we shall not accomplish the object of our visit unless we can find some one to call off these brutes."

Just then Charles remembered seeing a gardener at work among the roses, and called loudly to him. The old man left his work and came toward the brothers, respectfully taking off his hat as he asked, "What will your honors have?"

"We would like to be rid of those unmannerly dogs," said Charles; "they bar our way, and seem to be hostile. We have come to call on the Lady Superior, and also to visit an inmate of the convent."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed the gardener, who for the first time noticed the hostile attitude of the animals. "In all my born days I never see the likes of this. Those dogs are the gentlest creatures in the world, and many a poor wanderer have they led to this asylum on a cold winter night. Begone, Bruno! go away wid ye, Jasper!" he cried; "ye'll get a reprimand from the lady for yer bad manners. Well, I never in all my life! It beats my reckoning. Go home to your kennel, and wait there till I report ye." The dogs, in obedience to the order, moved off slowly and sulkily, with their tails between their legs. When they had got about fifty yards away they turned around and gave out a sharp bark as of defiance, and moved on again to the stable-gate, where they sat on their haunches and watched the visitors.

"I am sorry," said Charles to the gardener, "that we have made such a bad impression on your watch-dogs. As we are the only ones that seem to have done so, it looks like a bad omen."

"Not a bit of it, sir," answered the old gardener; "don't fash yer brains about such things as that. Dogs is like other people, and has their quips and quirks, an' ye can't account for their doings. But the lady will be mortified when she hears how her pets behaved, for she is awful fond of them. It was them as saved her own life on a bitter winter's night, and led her to our gate. Did yer honors mind the beautiful motto over the arch? Well, she came in, faith, at the bidding of the dogs, and has remained here ever since, resting in peace and doing good to all who come near

her. It was these arms that brought her in from the gate to the convent fire when she was frozen stiff as a log, and all the life gone out of her entirely. But yer honors are tired listening to an old man, whose tongue wags itself to pieces when it can get a chance, so I will e'en ring the bell and gain admittance for yer honors."

The porter at once opened the door and admitted the brothers and *Bene Trovato*, after Charles had slipped a dollar into the old gardener's hand. The latter went off with a profound bow. "Ah!" he said, "I knows a gentleman when I sees one, though it seems those unmannerly dogs didn't."

As the brothers entered the hall they were struck by the profound silence that reigned. Their steps on the stone floor echoed in the vaulted roof, and reverberated along the somber aisles of the building, which was constructed in the shape of a cross. The faint sound of an organ, which seemed to be at a great distance, came floating upon the air, and its sweet melody had the effect of making the silence of the hall more impressive, for the solemn music seemed to be the only sign of life in the building.

No shadowy phantoms of the past flitted in imagination through these somber apartments, nor did they bring to mind visions of days departed, when melancholy bells rang out their solemn chimes. There was here no splendid pageantry to delude the senses as in the days of old, when convents were visited by stately dames attended by gallant knights bearing rich offerings to the chapel. There was nothing grand about this convent. All was simple and unpretending, but the silence that reigned around subdued the spirit, and if the visitor had a sentiment of religion in his soul, he could not but humble himself in a place which made him feel that he was in the presence of a superior power.

So felt the brothers as old Leonard softly closed the door behind them. There were no creaking hinges in that establishment; everything ran easily, and rust was a word unknown in the vocabulary. The motto, in large gold letters, facing the door, read, "Order is heaven's first law!" and showed the spirit that ruled the abode of holy Sisters, whose charities were dispensed to all who stood in need, and whose virtues were proclaimed far and near.

Old Leonard ushered the visitors into an anteroom on the right of the hall, and then the brothers handed their cards to him—"Mr. Charles Gale" and "Mr. James Gale."

"Tell the Lady Superior," said Charles, "that we would like to see her, and will not detain her long."

"Take seats, gentlemen," said the porter; "you will not be kept waiting long." He went out, closing the door noiselessly behind him, and the brothers were left in the somber-looking room.

It was a good-sized apartment, with two smaller communicating rooms on each side of it; it was so dark that they could scarcely discern the pictures on the drab-colored wall. The window-shutters were closed, and what light entered the room came through the slats. The heavy curtains were almost closed. The carpet was dark; the furniture consisted of a piano, sofa, and chairs of the same solemn hue. Care seemed to have been taken to make the room as plain as possible, and to shut out all idea that anything like worldly vanity existed in the Convent of the Sacred Cross. Three or four oil-paintings, representing the saints, hung upon the walls, but the light was too dim to permit the visitors to see if they possessed any merit.

At length their eyes became accustomed to the gloom, and Charles commenced to examine the pictures. James, whose heart was fluttering with the expectation of seeing Myra, stood leaning on the mantel-piece with his face fixed upon the door, expecting the advent of the Lady Superior.

Minutes seemed to him hours, when at last the door noiselessly opened, and a tall, stately female figure, dressed in black, her face covered with a long white veil, entered the room. She stopped for a moment, her eyes being unaccustomed to the dim light, and seeing the figure of a man standing by the mantel-piece, she approached him.

"I am the Lady Superior," she said, addressing James. "Do you wish to see me, or is there any one in the convent that you desire to see? In the latter case I shall be pleased to gratify you, if there is no good reason to the contrary."

When the voice that uttered these sentences struck upon the ear of James it thrilled every nerve and chord in his body.

At first he thought himself dreaming. Had this spirit come in the place of the Lady Superior to thwart his hopes of seeing Myra? Was it the spirit of that woman that had so marred his life, for the voice was hers? He was too familiar with the sound ever to forget it.

He, whose heart had never known fear before, now trembled in every limb, while his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

The Lady Superior, having given him ample time to answer, and

hearing no response, approached closer, and said, "I fear, sir, you did not comprehend me. I am the Superior of this convent, and await your wishes. If there is any one whom you wish to see, your wish will be granted if possible."

James Gale's speech came to him at last. "You the Lady Superior?" he exclaimed, with husky voice. "Is this some wild delusion?" And he peered in her face, as if he could penetrate through the thick veil.

The Lady Superior started back and staggered toward the door; then, stopping, she put her hands over her veil. "Mother of mercy! is this real, and is the dead alive?" she exclaimed. "Have I lost my senses? Heaven help me!" and she sank upon the floor.

Charles Gale, who had apparently been unobserved by the Lady Superior, rushed to her as she fell, drew aside the veil that covered her face, and revealed the countenance of Louise Morton.

Charles had recognized her voice the moment he heard it. It was one he could never forget, and he divined at once how Louise came there. He remembered the gardener's story of her having been brought to the convent by the two faithful dogs on a stormy winter's night. He saw it all as if by intuition, but how Louise could have become the head of a religious institution was more than he could conjecture.

When the Lady Superior found herself so roughly handled she made no attempt to summon assistance, but, raising her flashing eyes to Charles, whom she recognized as her old persecutor, she exclaimed, "Coward! you are as you always were!"

"Murderess," answered Charles, "I will strip you of your disguise, and hold you up to shame. Every inmate of this sacred house shall know who it is that rules over them and desecrates the name of religion. Look at that man, my brother, whose life you have wrecked, though, thanks to heaven, you have not his life to answer for."

"Is it so?" she shrieked, as she sprang to her feet. "The hawk is here; he has chased the partridge to her nest, where she thought she had found peace and rest. But the partridge will yet find rest where the hawk can not follow, and may heaven's vengeance overtake him!"

She carried at her girdle a little silver bottle supposed to contain smelling-salts. Before either of the brothers could stop her she raised it to her lips and swallowed its contents. Charles sprang forward and wrenched the bottle from her hand, but it was too

late, and Louise stood bold and defiant in the presence of her enemies.

"Now do your worst!" she cried. "In two minutes I shall be beyond your reach. May God forgive me! I would have been good and gained my way to heaven in time, but my persecutor would not permit me. Let him answer to God for my last crime." With these words she fell to the floor, writhing in agony, and in a few moments was a lifeless corpse.

The old look of courage and determination was fixed on her face, and her once beautiful lips retained the look of anger which they wore in other days when anything occurred to affront her.

"Judgment has come at last," said Charles, "but not in the way I expected. Yet it seems but right that the hand that was raised against every one should finally be raised against itself.

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will."

Here, in the very spot where she sought a sanctuary, where she had a right to suppose no one would ever think of searching for her, and where her secret was apparently impenetrable, we are attracted by an unseen power in order to unmask her. This is no mere chance. Had she gone on leading her deceitful life as a nun, she would have in the end died in the odor of sanctity. Tears would have been shed at her death-bed, and she would have received all the consolations of religion, with the assurance of eternal happiness in another and a better world.

"I can not believe that this woman, who was so steeped in crime, could have changed her disposition so suddenly; and so she was doomed to expiate her sins on earth by her own hand—about the hardest punishment any poor wretch can undergo. Had Louise been truly penitent, and sought this shelter for the purpose of expiating her sins, I think Heaven would have permitted her to continue here; but there is an earthly punishment sinners have to undergo that the flesh may be mortified before the soul can leave its earthly prison. It is well it happened as it has. Death has relieved the world of a wretch, and you, my dear brother, of an obstacle to your future happiness."

James had stood quite stupefied at the scene enacted before his eyes. For perhaps the first time in his life he had lost his nerve-power. He could not forget the evils that had followed in the train of his marriage with the woman that now lay dead before him. He

almost expected to see her rise and resume her old character of *la belle Autrichienne*. He saw again the glitter of the assassin's steel, directed though not struck by her hand. His head was in a whirl, and he was obliged to throw open the window to let in the air.

Then he came again to the body of Louise, and, after regarding it intently for a moment, said, in a husky voice, "She is beautiful even in death."

"Yes," replied Charles, "the angel that rebelled against God was far more beautiful than the tongue of man can tell. The most beauteous flower sometimes holds the vilest canker-worm, the sweetest honey the most subtle poison. Do not look on her if the sight so moves you. She wrecked your life; why should she not pay the penalty? I can feel no sorrow for one who had so much wickedness in her composition, for she could not have changed her heart in so short a time. You can not change paste to a diamond, or a thistle to a lily."

"Judge not," said James Gale, "until we hear from those with whom she has last lived how she performed her duties. I freely forgive her the evil she has done me if it turns out that she was penitent, which her high position here seems to prove."

"You are right; but come, let us raise her to the sofa, and then call for assistance. This affair may involve us in some trouble."

They carried her gently to the couch, arranging her veil along her body. Then Charles opened the door and stepped into the hall, where sat the old porter half asleep. The hall was as quiet as when the brothers had entered it. Not a shadow of one of the inmates flitted about, and the great clock was ticking away in tones that, in the absence of all other sounds, seemed to reverberate through the building.

"Old man," said Charles, "go at once for the doctor. Your mistress is very ill, and must have immediate aid. Run quickly, and I will reward you well for your trouble."

"Holy mother!" exclaimed Leonard, "my mistress ill, and those dogs howling so last night! Twice she sent for me to comfort them, but I could not, for they whined all night. But let me see the blessed saint, and get her orders. I can tell the doctor what she wants, and he can come provided with what is necessary."

"No, no!" said Charles, "time is precious. Run and do as I bid you."

"I can't run, sir; I am past that time; but I will do your bid-

ding with all the speed I can make." He hurried along the hall as fast as his old limbs would allow him, muttering *aves marias* to himself, and wondering what would become of the convent if the Lady Superior should die.

Leonard went straight to the convent infirmary, where he knew the doctor was, having admitted him at the front door not many minutes previous. The doctor could not exactly comprehend what was the matter from the old man's excited manner. He only understood that the Lady Superior was ill, and he hastened to the reception-parlor, while old Leonard went about moaning and telling every one that the Lady Superior was dying.

The doctor was a man that never lost his head—a long-limbed, stalwart fellow, with weather-beaten face, which showed that he never spared himself. He had a cold, gray eye that looked as if it could see into the remotest recesses of a sick person's body.

When he stood confronting the brothers in the reception-room, the doctor, though a stalwart man, looked like a pygmy by the side of these two men of Herculean form. "I was not aware," said he, in surprise, "that any one was here except the Lady Superior. Whom have I the honor to address, and how did this happen?"

"I am Charles Gale, banker, of New York, and this is my brother James," was Charles's reply. "We called to see the Lady Superior, and, while talking to her, she staggered and fell to the floor, apparently lifeless. We lifted her to the sofa. It is perhaps a case of heart disease, and we fear that she is dead."

"Heaven grant that no such misfortune befall this convent!" said the doctor.

He felt the pulse, and shook his head. He placed his ear over the heart, then, rising, said with a sigh, "Your conclusion, gentlemen, is correct. She is dead."

Then the doctor lifted the eyelids of the corpse and made a careful examination of the eyes, and, seeing a stain on the fine muslin scarf around the neck, he examined that carefully. Then taking from his pocket a pair of scissors, he cut out the stained portion and preserved it.

"There is a mystery here," said the doctor to Charles. "I find evidence of poisoning by aconite or strychnine. Can you throw any light on this painful matter?"

"Step into the next room with me," said Charles, who led the way. The doctor followed, wondering what all this could mean, and what could be the cause of the tragedy.

At this moment a dozen nuns rushed into the room, headed by Sisters Agatha and Erma, and threw themselves on their knees beside the corpse, their bosoms convulsed with sobs as they looked upon the white face of their dead Superior.

The beautiful countenance looked as if carved from Parian marble, and the only thing that made it seem unlike stone were the tresses of coal-black hair that had strayed from its fastenings and fallen partly over the face, and the long eyelashes that lay upon the pallid cheeks.

None of the Sisters except Agatha and Erma had ever seen that face before, as the Lady Superior had unveiled to no one since the day she was acknowledged an inmate of the convent. On all occasions she had worn her long white veil, of which no one had ever penetrated the mystery. She was as much a wonder as was the Veiled Prophet of Khorassan, the great Mokanna, who had

“O’er his features hung
The veil, the silver veil which he had flung
In mercy there, to hide from mortal sight
His dazzling brow till man could bear its light.”

All the nuns and scholars had longed to see her face, which they were told was transcendently beautiful. Now at last their longings were gratified, though at the expense of the happiness of every inmate of the convent. The face was not what they expected. Instead of the lineaments of an angel, they saw marble-like features, beautiful, but stern even in death, as if the Lady Superior had died with a curse upon her lips.

Old Leonard had lost no time in making known to all the convent the condition of his loved mistress. The school-room was at once deserted, and the young-lady boarders, some twenty-five in number, rushed to the room where the Lady Superior lay, to give what aid they could or to gratify their curiosity. These young people all loved the Lady Superior well. She had been their patient instructor while she was a teacher, and their kind adviser ever since. She had attended them in sickness, and in all things showed them the most loving kindness. How could they help love one who was so necessary to their comfort and happiness? And now they all congregated to increase the throng of mourners, and add their tears and sobs to those of the nuns.

James Gale and *Bene Trevate* were pushed into a distant corner of the room, owing to the great concourse of mourners, all of whom

were on their knees sobbing and praying for the eternal welfare of the Lady Superior's soul, though not one of them doubted but that it had gone straight to heaven.

The mourning women seemed dazed as they looked upon that stern, cold face, which they had never beheld except in their dreams. The question every one asked, amid the *aves* and *pater-nosters* that came in murmuring tones from their lips, was, Who would fill the place of this saintly woman?

In the mean time the doctor and Charles Gale were closeted in the adjoining room.

"What do you know of this tragedy, sir?" inquired the doctor.

"Do you recognize this silver bottle, which the Lady Superior wore at her girdle?" asked Charles, producing the little flask.

"Yes, I do," replied the doctor; "she wore it constantly. How came you by it?"

"I snatched it from her hand, but was not quick enough to prevent her drinking the contents. There are a few drops left of what is a deadly poison, to judge from the effect it had on her."

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed the doctor, "what a revelation! But why should she take poison? What did you do to drive her to this extremity?"

"When a woman," said Charles, "constantly carries about her person a bottle of poison, it must either be for the purpose of injuring some one, or putting an end to her own existence when the time arrives. With this lady that time had arrived. She was a great criminal, a fugitive from justice, and had sought this convent as the most effectual place of concealment."

The doctor fairly gasped for breath. His cold gray eyes started from their sockets as he approached Charles Gale with a threatening look.

"Your proofs, sir!" he exclaimed, "your proofs! Such a wild story will not pass current here, where the Lady Superior was almost worshiped."

Charles kept perfectly cool, simply saying, "But why did she carry poison? and why did she swallow it?"

"True," said the physician, "that is inexplicable. But how do I know she was not driven to it by threats? How do I know that she was not actuated by fear that her pure life would be tainted by accusations she could not refute, and that she flew to death to secure release from the persecutions of her enemies, hoping in that way to disarm their hatred, and trusting that in pity they would

let her pure name be untarnished in death? There is a reproachful look upon her countenance. It calls for retribution, or I am mistaken in the expression of dead people's faces."

"Yet why, I ask," repeated Charles, "did she carry a bottle of poison if she did not fear detection for some crime?"

"Who knows what means may have been used to force that poison down her throat?"

"I understand your insinuations, sir," said Charles; "and for a man who has had your experience it is not a rational view of the case. Now listen to me, and I will try to convince you, although against your will. I knew that woman well. Although young in years, she was old in iniquity. At the age of sixteen she secretly married her father's secretary, while encouraging the attention of two other suitors, and engaged herself to a third person, whose death she encompassed because he threw her off after learning of her marriage. She is believed to have connived at the death of her first husband because he stood in the way of her marriage with another. Then she married my brother, to hide the odium that clung to her for the part she took in her last lover's death. She went abroad with my brother and wrecked his life and fortune. She picked up scores of lovers. The world bowed down to her charms, but she picked out the worst man she knew and instigated him to attempt the murder of my brother. She then fled with her paramour in my brother's yacht, and commenced a career of piracy on the high seas. This pirate, house-breaker, and murderer got tired of her, as well he might, and finally sent her adrift upon the world, not caring what became of her. She had no home, but wandered here one stormy winter's night. You know the rest.

"This is a mere outline of her life. The man who seduced her from my brother died a week ago in my presence, and in his dying confession, which was committed to writing, he confirms much that I tell you now. You can read that confession if you still have doubts. Is it any wonder that such a woman, living in constant fear of detection, should carry about her, at all times, the means of self-destruction?"

"We came here," continued Charles, "on a different errand, with no expectation of finding this woman at the head of a religious house. When she entered the room and met her husband, whom she thought had been murdered, and seeing me, whom she thought wounded unto death by her paramour, she was so horror-stricken that she revealed herself in her agony. The time of detec-

tion, for which she had provided herself, had arrived, and she took the poison to shun the disgrace of exposure. For, of course, we could not permit so wicked a wretch to continue in a position that should be filled only by the noblest and best. Now, sir, you can easily find out all about me. I am Charles Gale, of the firm of Morton & Gale, bankers in New York. Do you think a man in my position would invent a tale such as I have told you? I can give you all the proof you require."

The doctor was astounded. The color had left his cheeks, his face was buried in his hands, and the tears actually trickled through his fingers.

At length he raised his head and said, in a sad tone, "I believe your story. There are circumstances that come back to my memory and convince me that what you have said is true. But I hope you will not make these things public, and change the love that all in the convent felt for the Lady Superior into horror and disgust. She was a great criminal; but if ever I saw a repentant sinner bending all her energies to reach the gates of heaven, it was she. All the good she has done here will never be known. Her life was passed in devotion, and in helping the unfortunate. She would have died within the year, for she was far gone in consumption, brought on, no doubt, by the brutal treatment of the wretch with whom she eloped. The exposure she endured before being brought into the convent extinguished the last chance of her recovery. She knew that her time was short, and always spoke of her approaching end with resignation, and as if she felt she had been redeemed. She punished herself vigorously, wearing hair-cloth next her skin, and abstaining from food, except what was barely necessary to sustain life and permit the performance of duty. I have attended her constantly, and, although I know she has suffered every torture from her complication of diseases, I never heard her murmur. She is looked upon and venerated as a saint, and her example will be felt as long as any of her subordinates live. Would you soil her memory? I beg you in mercy not to do so."

"I consider it the duty of man to be merciful," was the reply, "and I shall do nothing to contradict the impression that the Lady Superior died in the odor of sanctity, after a life of usefulness. As far as I am concerned, the friends of the departed may erect a monument to her memory covered with inscriptions of her virtues. Besides, she was my first cousin, and it is not likely I would soil my own name if I could help it. I told you her history because of

your doubts, and because you are a physician, to whom a secret should be as sacred as if disclosed to a Father Confessor."

"Thank you, thank you," said the doctor; "now let us go into the adjoining room. Our long absence may be commented upon. We understand each other, I believe."

While this conversation was going on between Charles Gale and the doctor the inmates of the convent continued to assemble in the room where the corpse was lying. Among others the Father Confessor of the convent had arrived, and was standing over the body, his hands lifted in prayer. The nuns were still sobbing and telling their beads, and the boarders, huddled together in groups, expressed their grief in copious tears.

After the Father Confessor had finished his prayer he turned to the assembled throng. "Children," he said, "this is a dispensation of Divine Providence, at which we must not repine, but show our faith by proper resignation. This good woman has gained her reward, and has gone to a happier home. The loss is ours. She died without receiving the last rites of the church, but that will be overlooked in consideration of her great piety. We will meet in the chapel in an hour from this time, when mass will be said for the repose of her soul. Go now, children, and let the lay Sisters take charge of the remains and prepare them for their last resting-place."

This was considered an order, and all in the room, except those whose duty it was to remain, began to move slowly away.

Two young girls, with their arms around each other's waists, were standing looking at the corpse while the room was being gradually emptied, when *Bene Trovato*, rushing from James Gale, knelt by the side of one of the young women and kissed her hand. The young person looked around to see who had been guilty of such levity, and started in surprise as she saw the boy's upturned face. She recognized him immediately, and, lifting him from the floor, clasped him in her arms. "How did you come here?" she exclaimed, and the look of horror which had dwelt on her beautiful face while looking at the corpse was succeeded by one of surprise and pleasure intermingled.

"Look, Myra," she said, in her impulsive way, "here is *Bene Trovato*, the dear child of whom I have often told you, and whose misfortunes so touched our hearts at Hawks' Roost. Is he not beautiful? But, poor child, he is dumb and can not speak, yet he is a most intelligent boy, and the dearest little fellow in the world.

O *Bene*! would that you had the power of speech, to tell me of those I love."

Bene Trovato's eyes twinkled with mischief, and, kissing the young lady's hand, he said, "Try me and see if I can not speak. I am cured, and can tell you lots of things."

She started in astonishment. "You little darling! This is a miracle. How did it happen? Tell me at once."

"I was cured at the institution where Mr. Vere Saye placed me."

"And how came you here?" she asked.

"Mr. Vere Saye brought me here," replied *Bene Trovato*, demurely.

"Vere!" she exclaimed, forgetting for the instant where she was, and startling the four lay Sisters who had taken charge of the dead body. They looked at her reproachfully, but she heeded them not; she could think of nothing but the man whom she loved best in the world.

"Vere!" she said again; "my own Charles here! Oh, take me to him, *Bene*!"

"He is in yonder room with the doctor," said the boy.

"I can't help whom he is with," was the impulsive answer. "I must see him! Come, child, let us go at once. O Myra! darling, I am full of joy. I will see him again—him whom I have talked to you of, and dreamed and thought of night and day for so many months. Stay here, Myra, until I bring him to you." She darted off with *Bene Trovato* to the room where Charles was. He was just coming out with the doctor, and was engaged in an earnest conversation.

In an instant Charles found himself clasped in the arms of a beautiful girl, and, looking down, saw that it was his long-lost Flossy. He thought at first that it was some delusion; but no, there were the laughing blue eyes of his soul's idol. Her light golden hair, beautiful form, and ruby lips told him that he had found his treasure at last.

Charles opened his arms to receive her, and pressed her to his breast with an ardor that almost took the breath out of her body. *Bene Trovato* stood by, his large eyes twinkling with pleasure. "I found her!" he cried, "I found her! In another minute she would have been gone."

The doctor looked astonished at these peculiar manifestations, and Charles had to finally say, "You must excuse me, doctor,

but this is a long-lost ward of mine, from whom I have been parted for many months, and whom I have found by the strangest accident."

"I see," said the doctor, who had his own opinions about Flossy being a ward. "Miss Carrolton and myself are good friends, although she seldom gives me a chance to prescribe for her. She is the picture of health, and the most interesting young lady in the convent. I am glad she is your ward, and, as we now understand each other in all that relates to the late Lady Superior, I bid you good-morning. I must go where my duty calls me."

When the doctor had departed, Charles Gale led Flossy into the little room he had just left, *Bene Trovato* following, and there he kissed her many times before his affection was satisfied. "Ah," he said, "Flossy darling, this is indeed joy! Never will I let you out of my sight again. The convent has not injured your looks, my dear Flossy. You are lovelier than ever."

"And you," said Flossy, "look splendid. Oh, how I have dreamed of you and prayed for you! Do you know, Vere—Charles, I mean—that, had you not found me, I think I should have become a nun? The Sisters told me it was such a peaceful life; but, to tell you the truth, I thought it too peaceful. I can not wear my nice dresses here."

"And did you really pine for me, Flossy?" asked Charles.

"Pine for you!" exclaimed Flossy; "that is not the word to express what I felt. I didn't eat a mouthful for a week after I came here. I have worn my oldest black bombazine dress, and have never even put on my high-heeled shoes since I came to the convent. I wore my hair in a knot at the back of my head, with a tortoise-shell comb for a whole month, until I got the headache so badly that I had to resume wearing it in the old fashion."

Charles laughed, and, kissing Flossy, said, "You dear, vain little Flossy, that was indeed devotion," at which *Bene Trovato* clapped his hands, and his eyes sparkled like diamonds.

"Come, youngster," said Charles, "you are having too much amusement for a small outlay. Go into the other room and shut the door."

"But I found her," said the boy, his eyes dilating, "and I don't want to lose her again."

"You shall stay with me, *Bene*, and hold my hand," said Flossy. "It will help keep you in order, Mr. Charles, for you have rumpled my hair." So *Bene* was allowed to remain, and we will

leave them and return to the room where the dead woman was lying.

James Gale had retired to the farther corner of the room, where he sat in the dim light quite unobserved until nearly every one had quitted the apartment. It was then that *Bene Trovato* had rushed forward and seized upon Flossy. A narrow strip of light came through the bowed window-shutters, which settled upon the head and face of the young woman that was standing with Flossy when she flitted away with *Bene Trovato*. She turned her head in the direction Flossy had taken, and seemed to be intensely interested.

As the dim light shone upon her face James Gale recognized Myra, but greatly changed from the Myra with whom he had parted the day after his marriage with Louise Morton. He remembered her in her Albanian costume, her face glowing with health and beauty, and her glorious hair falling over her shoulders. She was now dressed in deep mourning. She was as beautiful as ever, but her beauty was etherealized, like what we might suppose a spirit to resemble that had temporarily visited the earth to bring comfort to the souls of sinners. Her face was pale and her features attenuated. Her brown eyes were bright as ever, but the pupils were enlarged, and it seemed as if one could look through her eyes into the depths of her soul. Her hair no longer hung over her shoulders, but was made up into a plaited coil on the back of her neck, showing her Grecian head in all its beauty. But with all these changes she was like some beautiful picture of an ideal woman that had just stepped forth from the canvas.

As soon as he discovered Myra, James Gale moved softly toward her, afraid, if he did not at once accost her, she would flit away to regions of bliss and be seen no more on earth—for it seemed as if this were Myra's spirit and not her real self. He cautiously approached, for fear of alarming her, longing to clasp her in his arms and have her rest there for ever. A thousand thoughts rushed through his brain as he stood close to her. She did not see him as she watched the retreating Flossy, and beheld her clasped in the embrace of one who resembled in form the man she loved, but who was dead to her.

"Full of joy!" she said, repeating Flossy's words, with a sigh; "ah! there is no joy for me. Mine is buried in the grave of him I love, and all that is left me in life is to pray for him, and hope to be united to him in a better world than this. Why did not heaven

spare that noble woman there to go on and perform good deeds, and let me go in her place—I who have no joy on earth, and whose mind is so selfish that it only thinks of one object, which is a sin in the sight of heaven?" She covered her eyes with her hands, while tears streamed through her fingers.

Nothing could exceed James Gale's joy when he heard Myra speak these words; he almost dreaded interrupting her for fear his sudden presence might shock her, for he knew that she considered him dead. But he thought to himself that joy never kills, and, without more ado, he gently touched her shoulder.

Myra took her hands from her face and turned toward him, shrinking with fear; then suddenly her eyes flashed with joy. "Does the grave give up its dead, that they may visit the afflicted on earth?" she exclaimed, in a faint voice, and regarding him intently, "or is it my own love in real flesh and blood? Is this reality, or is it the phantasm of the brain? Is there still joy left for me on earth? Speak, Robert, or I shall die!"

"Myra," said James, "this is my own real self; I am alive, and come to claim my reward. Go with me into the small room, where I can explain everything to you. We are not private here." And he took her hand and led her away.

This conversation had been carried on in low tones, and passed unnoticed by the lay Sisters that were attending the corpse. So intent were they in their duties that they heeded nothing that was going on elsewhere.

When they entered the little room James closed the door and held out his arms. Myra flew to them as would the dove to its nest when its mate was cooing for it to return home. Myra felt that she could rest upon James's breast for ever and listen to the beatings of his heart—a heart she felt was hers, although he had bound himself to another.

Presently Myra raised her tearful eyes to his and inquired, reproachfully, "Why have you left me so long in ignorance whether you were alive or dead?" She forgot, with a woman's inconsistency, that she had written to him that she had bound herself to heaven, and would pass the remainder of her life in praying for him, and that he would never see her again.

"I could not communicate with you, Myra," said James, "while there was a barrier between us. It would have been a sin for me to distract your thoughts from good works while I was separated from you by an impassable gulf. I thought that long ere this

you would have taken the vows of a nun, and my prayer was that you might forget me, for I wanted to be dead to all the world. Now the case is different ; the barrier is removed, for the woman who deluded me by some magic power is dead. To the last I did my duty by her, as you bade me."

"Dead, do you say?" exclaimed Myra, clutching his arm ; "then I commit no sin in loving you the same as I have done ever since I knew I had a heart."

"Yes," was the reply, "my wife is no more, and there is nothing to prevent our hearts from beating in unison, and our living for each other from now until death parts us."

Myra lifted her head, a look of agony came over her face, and she burst into tears. "O merciful Heaven ! I forgot, in my transport of joy, that I had pledged my life to thee. Robert, I was this day to have taken the preliminary steps to becoming the bride of heaven, and I have let my weak nature triumph over my strong resolves. We will have to dwell apart, for I can not break my vows without peril to my soul. The death of our good Lady Superior will postpone everything for a time ; but that will make no difference, as I am already a nun in the eyes of the Sisters and in the sight of God. O Heaven ! be merciful to me if I have sinned in thought and allowed my mind to swerve from the sacred things on which alone it should be set. I will always pray for you, Robert, and shall take an interest in your welfare. That shall be my consolation, and all I ask of you is that when I die you will plant a flower on my grave, and water it with your tears."

"And would you wreck my life, Myra, merely to gratify these Sisters and in order that you may not appear inconsistent ? What can they give in comparison with what I should be to you ? It is natural that the nuns should wish to make a proselyte of you, but this convent life would not suit you. This is a place of retreat where those weary of the world hope to find peace on earth and everlasting bliss hereafter. But you have something to live for. My love will offer you a haven where the tempests of life will never reach you, for my breast will be the breakwater to keep off their fury. You know not the many vexations of a convent life. You have never encountered the small ambitions, the intrigues, the jealousies, the heart-burnings that exist among the Sisters. You have been here simply as a boarder, and have never seen the real inside life of the nuns. They represent humanity as it is seen elsewhere, only in a better shape ; but, notwithstanding they are engaged

in a higher system of morality than is known elsewhere, you will find they are not free from the weaknesses that beset the human race.

"You would only find out these things when you became one of the sisterhood. One never knows anything of a family until he becomes an inmate of the house; a man never knows the real character of a friend until he sails or travels with him. Believe me, Myra, these are truths that you would find out when too late. You have loved me too long to be able to bear the stern life of the cloisters. If I had died it would have been different; your affections would then have been in the grave, and all your thoughts bent on heaven. It is now your duty to seek happiness, and enjoy the beautiful world that has been given for our abode. There are higher duties in life than seeking refuge from its ills in a seclusion where one can only gratify selfish feelings. It is true that the charity that springs from this institution is most beneficial; but what would be your usefulness here compared with what it might be in the great world, where you would come in contact with scenes of misery and want, where you could with your ample means dispense twenty times the amount of charity you would be able to do here? Nuns see little of the outside world; their life is spent in praying for the unfortunate, without means of giving them actual relief. Your duty, Myra, is to follow me, and save from total loss that portion of me that has survived the wreck. I offer you a love that will compensate you for all you give up here."

While Myra listened to him her tears flowed fast, but she raised her eyes to his. "But what a glorious life it would be," she said, "to live to reach the position of Sister Imogene, the Lady Superior, to die in the odor of sanctity, and then to have one's soul translated right to heaven! What morality she taught, and what a pious life she led, although we know she had been subjected to great privations!"

"Listen, Myra, to me," said James Gale. "I will say but a few words to destroy the illusion that seems to possess your mind. I told you that the barrier that formerly existed between us was removed, that my wife was dead, and that we could now love without sin. In the corpse of the Lady Superior you see the mortal remains of the woman that charmed all hearts, and made my heart wretched. The Lady Superior was Louise Morton, whom, in a fit of madness, I married. Previous to marrying me she had com-

mitted many crimes, and finally eloped with her paramour, leaving me for dead with a knife near my heart. She remained with her paramour, who was a pirate, until he tired of her, and, after treating her most brutally, cast her on shore in this city. She sought the convent on a bitter winter's night, and was found nearly frozen at the gate. You know of that, and what she afterward became. Whether she was disgusted with life, and feared that her sins would be punished, or really was overcome by the spirit of repentance and determined to devote herself to heaven, no one will ever know. She may have sought these walls as a safe asylum from justice, but the morality emanating from such a source could hardly be worthy of imitation. I never dreamed of meeting my wife here. I came to see you. When she came into the room she recognized me, and was horrified at the specter she supposed stood before her, for she thought I had been murdered by her paramour. Her next idea was that I had come with my brother to bring her to justice, and she took poison from a bottle hanging at her girdle, thus terminating her ill-spent life."

He heard a gasp at his side. Myra had fainted at the horrible revelation. She was trembling when he commenced his discourse, a choking sensation was felt in her throat, and she was overcome with sobbing, but when he came to the final act of the tragedy she could no longer endure it.

This was a phase in womanhood with which James Gale was not acquainted, for those with whom he had to do were not in the habit of fainting. At first he was horror-struck, thinking she was dying, and, placing her gently upon the sofa, he rushed out for aid.

He opened the door of the small room into which he had seen his brother go, and beheld Charles seated quietly upon a sofa holding one of Flossy's hands, while *Bene Trovato* held the other.

Flossy jumped up as James entered. "Why, Mr. Robert!" she exclaimed, and rushed to welcome him.

He pressed her hand. "Flossy," he said, "Myra wants you. I fear she is dying," and he dragged her from the room, Charles and *Bene Trovato* following in the rear. "Thank God we have found you, Flossy!" said James; "but help me to save Myra."

"How can Mr. Robert know Myra?" thought Flossy; "or is he the one for whom she is always praying? But then that one is dead. This must be some other lover." Flossy's reflections were terminated by the sight of Myra lying on the sofa pale as death.

"She has fainted," said Flossy. "I have seen her so before. Open the windows."

She ran for a pitcher of water, and threw some of the contents in Myra's face. Then she applied her smelling-salts, and Myra began to revive.

When she opened her eyes and saw herself surrounded by her friends, Myra burst into tears. "Oh, carry me away!" she exclaimed; "let me forget this place. To think that the beautiful delusion under which I rested should be shattered to pieces. I was taught to believe that everything here is pure and good, and that my vision would be brightened by this holy atmosphere, so that I would soon be able to look through golden vistas into heaven.

"Month after month have I knelt to the Lady Superior, believing that I was looking upon some glorious messenger from heaven, whose immaculate hand would lead me through the mazes of this wicked world to the abodes of bliss. That fond delusion is no more. Now I remember the look of horror Flossy's face assumed when she first saw her unveiled, and, while tears were gushing from every eye, none came from her. She knew her at once as the person she had so often talked to me about, whose crimes were so dreadful. Yet the Lady Superior was the type of goodness here—a woman that was leading me to wreck all my hopes in life. She gathered from me all the secrets of my heart, and made me believe that the only rest for me was to be found under the habit of a nun. See how she wrecked the life of him whom I have loved and venerated from early youth. There is no guile in him; he was only too good for her. She should be exposed to the world, even if she is dead."

Charles Gale took Myra's hand. "I am his brother, Myra," he said, "and feel all that you can feel on such an occasion. But you must not forget the kindness that has been shown you here by these good nuns, who are not responsible for what their Superior did before she entered the convent. I have made a promise not to reflect upon the Lady Superior's memory. She may have repented; at all events she must rest in the odor of sanctity. You have happiness enough in store for you to indemnify you for all your sorrow. The elasticity of youth will soon make you forget what you have suffered. Come, go with us from this place. Our presence is no longer needed here. I will take you to those who will cherish you in their hearts as if you had always been one of them."

Myra looked up at Charles, and her eyes filled with tears. "And

you are his brother?" she said. "You are worthy of each other. I will go with you and do as you tell me. I can take with me what few articles I require and can send for the rest. The sooner I leave this place the better."

They rose and left the room. Fortunately, the lay Sisters had removed the body of the Superior to prepare it for high mass and burial.

"There is no head now to the convent," said Charles. "Whom shall I ask to see, Myra? We can not leave without paying the Sisterhood the courtesy of telling them that, as your guardians, I shall take you and Flossy away."

"Sister Agatha is the oldest nun," said Myra, "and I will call her."

The Sister presently appeared, and Charles informed her that, owing to the untoward event that had taken place, he would take both the young ladies home for a while, as he was their guardian.

"You had better do so, sir," said Sister Agatha, sobbing; "this is an unhappy time, and will break us up for a while. We shall be glad to welcome your wards back again when order is once more restored to the convent." Then she kissed Flossy and Myra, and returned to her duties.

The preparations of the latter were shortly made, and the two girls emerged from the convent, never again to enter it. They were soon in the carriage and on their way to the city.

CHAPTER LXIV.

FINAL ADJUSTMENTS.

JAMES wished Myra to go to his own house for a few days, in order that she might recover from the great mental excitement she had lately undergone before he introduced her to his parents. Charles, *Bene Trovato*, and Flossy were to proceed to the house near Bowling Green, but to say nothing of James and Myra. That was to be a surprise for the future.

The reader can easily imagine how Flossy and Myra were received by those who loved them so well. Joy reigned triumphant in both houses, and every cloud was tinged with sunshine.

After Flossy had had time to rest, Charles questioned her with regard to the manner of her abduction from Holmes's farm.

"I was walking out, as you know already, in company with the two dogs, when I saw three suspicious-looking men coming toward me. I turned around and hurried toward home, when I heard the men running after me. The dogs then attacked the men, who shot one of the animals dead and wounded the other, which lay howling on the ground in the agonies of death, as I thought. Then the men put a bag over my head, carried me to a boat, and took me on board a sloop, where I was put in the cabin, almost frightened to death. In about an hour a man came into the cabin and said, in the most impudent manner, 'Well, Flossy, we bagged you nicely, and here you are, monarch of all you survey.' I did wish that I was a man just to box his ears, and I told him that my name was Miss Carrolton. I wish you could have seen him go on. He laughed like mad, and danced all over the cabin. Then he pulled off his red wig and false whiskers and eyebrows, and said, 'Well, Flossy, what do you think of me now?' It was George May. I was completely bewildered, but I told him my mind pretty freely, at which he laughed more than ever. After I had said my say, he bade me sit down and listen to him.

"'Flossy,' he said, 'in me you behold your long-lost brother George. I have taken you away to save you from the vilest wretch in the world. As your natural protector I require your obedience, and will keep you prisoner until you promise to have nothing more to do with a man that calls himself Allan Dare, *alias* Vere Saye, *alias* Charles Gale. When you make up your mind to obey me I will make life a paradise to you.'

"Of course I cried, and, although George convinced me that he was really my brother, I hated him cordially. He treated me cruelly for a whole month, I fretting myself away to a shadow, and at the end of that time he told me that, unless I took an oath not to see you again, he would go right off and kill you. I then consented to go to the Convent of the Sacred Cross, where you found me; but I fear that he will find out that I have left the convent, and will be revenged on you. O Charles! you don't know how wicked he is—and to think that I once considered him so beautiful and good! I thought the name you once gave him—'Prince Golden Hair'—so appropriate; and I nearly lost your affection because I partly sided with him."

"Have no fear of your brother's malice, dear Flossy," replied

Charles. "He can harm no one any more; he is at peace with all the world. I hope the news will not pain you when I tell you that he is dead and buried. It was well that he died, for, had he lived, he would have involved himself and others in much misery. Do not try to learn any more of your brother's history; it will only give you pain."

Flossy wept when she heard of her brother's death. "He was all that was left of my immediate family," she sobbed. "Only think what a comfort he would have been to me had he been as good as I once thought him! But I have you, and that will suffice."

Charles petted her for a while, and Flossy, whose disposition was not given to tears, soon became cheerful.

The family were so glad to get this bright creature back among them again that they showered caresses on her all day long. *Bene Trovato* hardly left her side. "I found her," he would say, "and I will never leave her again."

As to the African traveler, he could not keep away from Flossy, but sat with her hand in his half the day. "Ah, Flossy," he would say, "you can not think how I missed you. I could not afford to lose one of my sweet family, although not long ago I was a lone traveler without kith or kin. I came home to visit my dead, when, lo and behold! I find them all alive. A large family is such a blessing! I could not do without one now. I remember King Tom Tom's family; he had twenty-six daughters and ten sons—a most interesting set. Queen Tom Tom was the mother of twenty of them, but I am sorry to say that King Tom Tom had his Leah, and his Rachel, and his Bilhah, and his Zilpah, like the old patriarchs of whom we read. It was the only defect in Tom Tom's character, for he was a great and good king."

"But, darling," said Agnes, kissing him, "Flossy must not hear of such things. You can tell me all about it some other time."

On the fifth day after Flossy's return Charles took a carriage and drove to James's establishment. When Charles entered he found his brother in the paneled room. Several of the panels were drawn back, and from the openings thus disclosed James was selecting packages of what seemed to be bank-notes.

"Where did you get all this money?" asked Charles, in great surprise. "If I remember rightly, you told me all your wealth was gone except the ferry stock. Have you Aladdin's lamp?"

"I told you truly," replied James, "for this money is not mine. I am at this moment, brother, looking my greatest sin in the face. Before I married I determined to transfer all my wealth to Europe, being convinced in my own mind that I should some day come to grief, and be arraigned before the courts of law. I intended to reside in Europe altogether after my marriage, for I felt that my wife would never reinstate herself in public opinion here, and that I would in that way elude the law, if it ever got upon my track. George May assisted me in removing the money from the bank, some of which was transferred to the schooner. Among the funds was the amount you see before you, \$590,000 of deposits, and \$336,000 belonging to the Gas Company, from which I had already, by trickery, made a great deal of money. This latter amount would have been called for in ten days to pay dividends. It was not my intention in the first instance to steal this money, but to deposit the amounts in the Morton bank to the order of those concerned. So I transferred the funds to this house, and then left my duty unfinished. I had ample time to deposit the money, but the feeling of cupidity took possession of me; and although I had, as I supposed, ample funds to supply my own needs and Louise's extravagances, yet it seemed to me that I could not part with this money. I placed it in these walls, behind the panels, to keep for a rainy day in case misfortune should overtake me, and I felt assured that, happen what would, Myra and my dependents would be provided for."

"But," said Charles, "they would not need anything like this amount of money. What suffering you caused those who could not afford to lose their small deposits!"

"Do not reproach me, brother," said James. "I have thought of this since, and thought of it then, but I was arrested so unexpectedly, and had to fly from the country in such a hurry, that I had to leave the money here where I had concealed it, thinking, if I changed my views, I could find an opportunity of depositing it for the benefit of the owners. Here it is all safe, just as I left it. You can deposit it in your bank, and notify the owners that you will pay one hundred cents on the dollar and no questions asked. The different owners will be too glad to get their money to be inquisitive. If they ask you, you can tell them the truth—that the money was deposited with you to return to its owners, and that it had never been removed from the city."

"There is one item I wish you would explain," said Charles.

"There is still missing \$100,000 in gold belonging to Mr. Eton, which was removed and scrap-iron put in the boxes in its place."

James looked astonished. "I know nothing about it," he said. "It never went to the schooner. May probably kept it; but I will work and make it up, and will pay the interest regularly from my income until I can discharge the principal."

"Thank Heaven for all this!" exclaimed Charles. "It makes our way so much more easy now. We can take these notes in with us to-day and put them in our bank on our way home—for you must return home to-day. Father and mother are longing to see you."

"Must I go to-day?" asked James. "O Charles! I have been so happy here! These walls seem to me to have been lighted by a million lamps, and the floors seem to be strewn with lovely flowers. Had I my own way I would not let a footstep approach this land of bliss—my Garden of Eden, my fairy-ground—but would remain here for ever, and gaze upon the peerless pearl that adorns it until the time comes for me to be united to her."

"But I must not be too selfish. I will go with you and present my pearl to my parents. I hope they will love her as she deserves to be loved. Let us put away these notes, and you shall see Myra at home as I have always seen her, and as she looks in yon picture. I have told her all my story, and she has consented to be mine for ever—to walk hand in hand with me through life, and be my guardian angel."

He rose and touched the knob in the wall, when the cuckoo-clock sounded its sweet though solemn chimes through the house. Presently light footsteps were heard in the hall, then a gentle knock came at the door, and Myra entered in all her loveliness, dressed, as of old, in her Albanian costume.

Charles started in surprise at the transcendent beauty of the girl in her present costume. He had parted from her but a few days before, yet the hue of health had already returned to her cheeks. Her eyes were as bright as diamonds with the happiness that had come to her, and, as she pressed forward with alacrity to greet Charles, every movement was as graceful as a fawn. He stooped and kissed her forehead. "Ah, dear child!" he said, "you will eclipse the others, although they are very beautiful. I shall love you as I do my darling sister, and all the family will welcome you as a bright gift from heaven. You must accompany us home to-day, and let your future relatives see you in all your beauty."

Myra demurred a little to the proposition, wishing to appear before her future relatives in her plain convent-dress, but James wished it otherwise, and, with the promise that she might be permitted to throw a light cloak over her costume and a scarf over her head-dress, she left the room to prepare herself for the visit.

On their way they stopped at the bank to deposit the money, and then drove to Agnes's house.

When they arrived the family were all in the parlor. Myra threw off her cloak and scarf, and then entered the room where the family were enjoying themselves, not having heard the front door open.

All started in surprise as they saw this gorgeous vision enter the room with the brothers. James led Myra to his mother, who came forward to meet them.

"This is Myra, mother," said he, "the light of my soul. She will be your daughter; take her to your heart and give her a mother's love. I have been father and mother to her since her childhood, and she has returned my devotion with her heart's best love."

Agnes kissed the sweet girl affectionately, and in another instant Flossy had her arms around Myra's neck; then Mary greeted her with warm affection.

The old traveler then came forward and, taking both of Myra's hands in his, kissed her with much ceremony. "Welcome, my dear child," he exclaimed, "to this our abode. I shall love you, as I love these others, with all my heart. I came home from Africa thinking I had no family, but, lo and behold! I find them all alive and coming in all the time. Although I do not remember ever to have met you before, yet I am sure I have seen you in my dreams. But this I can tell you: there is nothing in all Africa that can compare with you."

Never were people so happy as those that composed the Gale circle. In the evening, when Harry returned from the bank, he added his warm welcome to that of the others. All sat down to a bounteous dinner, and merriment ruled the hour.

It was decided in conclave that the lovers should all be united at the same time, and the first of October was fixed upon as the happy day.

James Gale, having plenty of time on his hands, was selected to prepare the villa at Hawks' Roost for the occasion, and renovate and refurnish the mansion in a style worthy of the ceremony.

It was to be strictly a family affair. The only invitations issued were to Mr. Lindsay, Mr. Bernard, and the old chief of police, who was much broken down now since he was deprived of Allan Dare's services.

On the evening of the first of October, three months and a half after the Gales were united, the villa at Hawks' Roost was alight from cellar to garret, and the family and guests were assembled, with the clergyman, in the great room.

The brides and grooms had taken their places, and three more beautiful girls were never seen together. The minister performed the ceremony in a most impressive manner, and though tears were shed, yet they were tears of happiness. There was to be no parting. All were to live under the same roof, and the honeymoon was to be spent at the villa at Hawks' Roost. What greater happiness could be desired?

When the ceremony was concluded, Charles Gale, after embracing his father and mother, stepped up to the chief of police, for whom he had a surprise.

"Who is that fine-looking man, and that beautiful girl beside him?" inquired the chief, pointing to James and Myra. "I heard of two couples only that were to be married. Who are the third?"

"That man, sir," said Charles, "is my much-injured brother James, who was maligned by the press and persecuted by the officers of justice."

"And was arrested by his brother," said the chief. "I remember the case," and the old man's eyes twinkled. "If I recollect aright, his brother and the chief of police took no steps to rearrest him after his escape."

"Because they were both convinced that a man who possessed so many noble qualities must have something redeeming in his character, and that there was not sufficient proof to convict him of crime. It is well they came to this conclusion, for there is not an offense charged against him that can be proven. If you remember, in June last an article in the papers announced the fact that the banking-house of Morton & Gale would pay the depositors in the late bank of James Deville one hundred cents on the dollar, and that the same would be paid to the Gas Company and to Eton & Co. This was all my brother's indebtedness, and he had no opportunity to make it good until this time. James Deville took up his residence at Monaco, as you remember, under the name of von Benst. I was with him at his death-bed, and have a certificate of

his death and burial from the physician that attended him in his last hours."

"I understand it all," said the chief, his eyes twinkling brighter than ever; "your brother has been born again!"

"Yes," said Charles, "exactly so."

"All's well that ends well," said the chief, "and I am too fond of you, Dare, to interfere with your arrangements. I am under obligations to you which I can never repay. You have placed me upon too high a pedestal for me to prove ungrateful, although ingratitude seems inherent in those who have received favors. I am satisfied that your brother is all that you say; otherwise you would not be in his company. But, good Heavens! what a splendid-looking pair of men you are!"

"My brother is a far better man than I am," said Charles; "he forgives, which I do not always. He would forgive his worst enemy and lift him up, to be injured by him again."

"I shall miss you, Dare," said the chief. "In fact, I do not know how I shall be able to get along without you."

"You can always have my services," said Charles Gale, "whenever you require them; to you I shall always be Allan Dare."

The chief pressed his hand, while tears sprang to his cold gray eyes. "Come," he said, "introduce me to those of the company that I do not already know, and let me congratulate those whom you have fished up out of the sea, or found in out-of-the-way places and brought together in so marvelous a manner. Dare, you are a wonder!"

The old chief was taken up and introduced to the bridal parties, shaking James's hand warmly, and kissing all the ladies.

After the usual greetings from all the other friends, the old African traveler approached, kissed the brides, and shook hands with everybody else. "Well," said he, "I must acknowledge this beats anything of the kind I ever saw in that blessed Africa. True, I have seen more gorgeous weddings there, but never such beautiful brides as my three daughters, nor any grooms that could compare with my three sons, although when Queen Tom Tom's second daughter was married to the son of King Dodo there were fifty kings present, and the bride came riding in upon a camelopard, accompanied by sixteen bridesmaids on elephants; but then the bride was without a veil, and wore no orange-blossoms—a great defect. But you know it is too hot in that blessed country, and the ladies don't wear any—"

"I shall get very jealous of Queen Tom Tom, James," interposed Agnes, "if you talk so much about her."

"You need not," replied her husband, "for I never thought of any one but you night or day."

After the wedding the happy party sat down to a fine supper, and enjoyed themselves greatly.

Our story is ended, and the reader will no doubt say *Laus Deo!* little thinking of the trouble it has given the writer to collect together from authentic sources all the facts of the narrative.

These happy ones had all they wanted in life, and, as the lovers wandered hand-in-hand over hill and dale, sitting in pleasant groves and on sunny slopes, strolling through forests over the soft carpet of fallen leaves, or gazing on the golden glory of the woods as they were illumined by the rays of the setting sun, their hearts beat with gratitude to Heaven for permitting them to enjoy so much bliss.

They raised their eyes to heaven in the mellow light which tinged the blue hills above them, and prayed that their lives might glide along as smoothly and peacefully as the silver clouds floating along in the ethereal sky and fading in the distance like vanishing sails upon the smooth bosom of the ocean.

It was Chic's delight to watch these happy people as they reclined under the hawks' oak and in other pleasant spots. The happiest lovers of them all were the African traveler and Agnes, whose favorite resort was Falcon Rock, overlooking the Hudson. They lived over again their loves of early youth, before misfortune overtook them.

Chic was often seen perched on the topmost branches of the ancient oak with note-book in hand and the hawks all around him. They had come to regard him as one of themselves, and Chic protested that he understood their language perfectly. Among other wonderful things they told him that their motto, which was "Uprightness, love, honor, and faith in God," would always win against craft and deceit, and that virtue would always in the end be rewarded.

A short time after the events above recorded, *Bene Trovato* was restored to his parents. His mother, who had been written to, came for him and took him to his beautiful home on the River Canema, where he became a favorite with all who knew him, but never forgot his benefactors.

The Mortons remained abroad until the death of Mr. Morton, which occurred about five years after the triple wedding, when Mrs. Morton and Angeline returned to New York.

Those who have taken any interest in this tale may hereafter have an opportunity of renewing their acquaintance with Angeline. Her life was full of vicissitudes, while her virtues shone with diamond luster amid all the calamities that threatened her.

THE END.



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